A

STATESMAN'S LOVE

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"My friend, when you love, let it be a woman whom you can love for ever."—BALZAC.

BY ÉMILE BOUCHER.

IN THREE VOLS.

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BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

It was mid-winter now. The snow lay thickly on the whole country—frozen hard—and I induced Fernie to come with me to the farm, where we were heartily welcomed as we took my son—Rohan Clifford, as he was named—to be the theme of praise and wonderment to the womenfolk.

"You should see mine," said Fernie, earnestly and wistfully, in a lull of the praises.

"We've none far to go to see a son of Verney Clifford's," said Elizabeth, who hated him, as did all the countryfolk about. And it was true.

"Leave the room, woman," said M'Causland sternly, and Elizabeth slunk out ashamed of her freedom, which was not meant for the unhappy young lady, as I told Fernie on our homeward way.

"Bring him here," I say, "he will be most heartily welcome, and get his father's faults forgiven by the countryfolk."

Fernie wept silently over the misery of her life. Blount had never been unpopular, and she could not reconcile herself to having a husband whom people hated—being all for sunshine and outward favour.

"Is it true," she said at length, with a faint hope of refutation, "what that woman said about him?"

"Yes," said I. "See, it is snowing again; let us turn aside and take shelter." So I led on to a little lane outside the park, where, between high banks of snow, stood a hovel, dark by contrast with its dazzling whiteness. This we entered, and stood by the little fire. A tall, pretty girl came in from the back room, and in reply to my inquiry said her grandfather was in bed with rheumatics.

"Where is your little nephew, Betty?" I asked.

"Ah," she said, drawing me aside out of Fernie's hearing, "she is Verney Clifford's wife; but oh! milady, he is leaving Jenny and Tommy to starve at Letchford. I took them a loaf on Sunday, which I begged from Elizabeth at the Farm, and a couple of eggs; but they have no fire

except bits o' sticks from the hedgerows, for father an' mother turned me out for helpin' her, and but for grandfather I should be as badly off as she. Indeed 'tis a hard case. Jenny is but twenty now, and no one will hire her, tho' she is a main good dairy girl."

Fernie had drawn near and heard every word; her eyes were flashing.

"You lie!" said she, "you impudent slut, you bold hussy, you! I will ask Sir Burleigh to turn you and your grandfather out in the snow—a parcel of trapesing wenches, slandering Milord Clifford on his own lands. 'Tis not to be endured."

"What can't be cured," said Betty, with spirit, putting her arms akimbo, whilst her eyes flashed fire, "must be endured; and your Lord Clifford is a villain—snow or no snow. Ask else my poor pretty sister at Letchford, and her little Tommy, both starving, and might be dead for all his care or thought. Ay, was I a man, I'd have his life."

"Shocking!" said Fernie, "to have the very rabble speak so of a nobleman at his own gates."

"Let him, then," said the girl, "act as a nobleman, as Sir Burleigh doth, and not devour the poor off the earth, as he always hath."

"Enough," I said, calling her away, her fine tall form trembling with rage and scorn, and her pretty country face aflame. I gave her a crown, and spoke gently to her, until she wept and begged Fernie's pardon, who disdainfully withdrew with me, declining to give her a word of peace or conciliation.

"Now you see," said I, "why he is hated."

Said she, "Some may steal a horse, and others may not look over the hedge, which is poor Verney's case."

"To steal a horse is not to starve a horse," I replied. "He is a bad man; I shall tell Sir Burleigh of Jenny's case, or myself provide for her."

"Blount was as bad," whined Fernie, "but his always married soldiers and became decent women. Why cannot this one?"

"This one," said I, "loved Verney Clifford too well; she is now half mad and unfit for work."

"You seem well up in all these things," sneered Fernie. "In the regiment my father managed them. We never had one scandal but a wedding came of it, and a very contented set of people they were. No other regiment in the service so happy. Why does not Sir Burleigh do the same?"

"Here, take the child," I said, my heart burning at this woman's lisping wickedness and worldliness—and disdaining any further discussion with her I walked on in advance, while Rohan, his little face well powdered with snow, looked up at me solemnly, as though to ask what grieved or astonished me.

Fernie, with many endearing words, placed him in Janet's arms, who had come to meet us, and who made off home with him in silent indignation. Then we went into dinner, with faces reddened by the biting wind and stinging sleet, and formed our usual uncomfortable trio in the study afterwards. Fernie could not talk, nor would not try while Sir Burleigh was near. She was by turns sullen or disdainful, and both in excess of any occasion offered her; but she loved cards, so I seated them to cribbage and knitted a cloak for the boy, of purple wool, which I meant lining with thick soft silk. On mentioning this, when she inquired of its make, she grew indignant, and muttering that her own boy was in rags whilst that brat must needs be in velvet and pall, she threw down the cards of an unfinished game and went off to her own sitting-room, angrily—but there was a good fire in it, so she was not to be pitied.

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh, angrily, "it were

best Verney came to claim his wife, By——! I'll turn her out in the snow else. How came he, so shrewd a man, to marry such a fool? She is not pretty, she is not clever—she would play Verney false to-morrow, as she played Blount false before. Do you like her? d——d impudent slut!"

"Well enough, sometimes," I replied. "Don't tarre us on to fight, Sir Burleigh. There is always an *arrière-pensée* to that in the mind feminine."

"I'm d——d if there isn't an *arrière-pensée* in the mind masculine to order such a mis-proud hussy out of the place," he retorted, indignantly. "Why can't she let you alone? You are peaceable enough. What is that work she quarrelled about? Give it her, in God's name—silk and all if she wants it."

"That," said I, "will I not; she can knit well enough and has more time for it. This is for Rohan, let her knit for her own."

"Well spoke," he laughed, "and most mother-like—all for your own. Why, a year ago you would have given it her without grudge. Come, and let me see this bone of contention."

"Do some of it." I put the knitting-pins into his hands and guided his clumsy fingers over the intricate stitches till he laughed with restored

good humour, and Fernie, coming back, laughed too, and behaved for the rest of the night much better, having probably heard his threat, and being still pretty well afraid of him, in spite of her petulance. So next day, as a peace-offering, I began a similar cloak for her, and kept her at it pretty well, which cured her, in some degree, of her peevishness, which was half due to weary idleness. Then I taught her chess, which we two played, sitting opposite Sir Burleigh, who leaned lazily back watching us, as he sipped his wine, and praising every move I made with most unblushing partiality, and in utter ignorance of its significance to the game.

"A foolish, fond old man!" whispered Fernie. "Blount was just like that. I used to call him so, when he would praise me, right or wrong; but 'tis sweet, after all, to be believed in. Verney believes in nothing—in no one human being—and says he never did in his whole life long. Must not that be a dreadful state of mind?"

"Blind unbelief is error, undoubtedly," I rejoined, "but misplaced faith is worse, for it may shipwreck a life."

"That poor little Jenny," whispered Fernie; "I felt sorry for her, though I seemed, and was, angry at the sister's boldness. I have looked her out a couple of silk sacques, which are past

my wearing, and some slippers, and will give them to the girl we saw for her."

These mistimed gifts I afterwards diverted, and Lady Clifford changed them to another crown, which I myself conveyed to Betty for her sister's use, lest milord should resent his wife's interference, as he, I knew, would do.

So to the ladies who of old time ruled it—Burleigh Manor—we had succeeded. They, doubtless, had their little cares and crosses, yet smiled down now from the pictured past as serenely as though their lives had been unruffled by care or contention. I was getting weary of its sameness, which was unrelieved even by solitude. Fernie was a perpetual fret to one's self-esteem, for 'twas impossible not to get angered with her weaknesses, and getting angry with so small a motive was wasted force.

By turns a wasp or a fly, either buzzing or stinging, we had little rest from her. I was often inclined to cure Blount of his futile regrets by describing her from my point of view, only that I knew 'tis impossible to see with other's eyes, and he should know her equally well with myself. It was, indeed, dwelling with a contentious woman in a wide house ; even her prettiness palled on one, so little sensibility was attached to it, unless 'twas that she was sensible

to cold, hunger, or mere bodily pain. We could not, in the absence of her husband, banish her our company, such as 'twas; nor did we desire hers, which was like an inferior toothache, or a cankered finger. In vain, by kindness and complaisance, by adapting our ways to hers, by deference and cheerfulness, did we seek to win her into some sort of unity—every concession induced fresh exactions. She was pre-eminently a barrack-woman, where a fresh interlocutor every five minutes kept her feeble intellectual fire alive by contributing a drop of oil to the lamp. With too much it overflowed, with none it lapsed; nor were we happy enough to hit the *juste milieu*. At length, just as the last straw of endurance was upon us, came a letter from an aunt—a town lady—inviting her for the spring to London, and giving leave, if she pleased, to add the rest of the winter to the visit. Glad though we were, Sir Burleigh wrote for Clifford's leave, and we waited with dreary patience the reply. Yes, it said, she might come, for she had for some time complained of our treatment of her. This gracious leave we did not quarrel with; but when she had gone a silent gladness, like a breath of spring, brooded over the relieved household, and once more our burdened lives became sweet to us.

On Verney's reappearance, Sir Burleigh scantly allowed a day to elapse ere offering a separate maintenance for his wife, to keep her free from the Hall; and, on being written to, she agreed to accept it in no very civil terms, blaming me for the offer; which, in fact, I had not encouraged in any way, but kept clear of. "However," said Sir Burleigh, "if three hundred a year frees us of her it is little enough for peace and comfort, and more than anyone else would give her." So her headquarters, as her husband had no house of his own, were with her aunt, Lady Dorothy Farringdon, in Mayfair, who seemed to suit her well.

The spring of 1743 came over the world in a sweep of colour and beauty, a wealth of bud and bloom, a saturnalia of song and promise, so far indeed as nature was concerned; but, politically, it was a parlous time, everyone looked on his neighbour with suspicion. France, it was rumoured, had made in secret large preparations to aid Stuart, and much uneasiness prevailed, together with a very conciliatory tone to the supposed favourers of the cause—a "give it a fig, a cherry, and a plum," fooling we saw through and despised. I had both hands and head full of work. M'Causland had good accounts from his French kinsman of the newly-

purchased estate there—an eventuality we liked not to discuss, yet which was necessary. From Kilmarnock we had frequent letters, with occasional brief lines to me from Stuart, who assured me he had twenty men's work in hand, which I could well credit, and, but for hope of success, would be harassed to death (which he spelt "deth"). Rohan, too, was growing, and teething, and going through the ceremonies incident to his age, which seemed, from what I heard, to be somewhat complicated, and rather unpleasant. So I let them mainly alone, satisfied with Janet's better knowledge, and the creditable way he was reported to come out of them all—a maternal trait not to be discommended.

Sir Burleigh was getting quite a statesman. He left all, or mainly, his home affairs to M'Causland, who conducted them with discretion, and he only appeared to ride about as usual to save gossip or conjecture. Whatever difference appeared, however, was attributed to domestic devotion, and much approved of—for the doctrine that I was one of themselves was a creed with the countryfolk, though in what I resembled them might have been difficult to determine, unless it were in excellent health—in that I vailed to none.

"Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them

all. What hast thou, then, more than thou hadst before?" That long-ago burnt letter, and a scant dozen lines since mentioned, were all the note, from himself, that I had of Stuart's existence. It was now April again, and the soft sheen of the woods, the brilliance of the world, brought back his image; and Kilmarnock's hints and insinuations of his gallantries at the Court of France brought to my mind the stories of history, of the insincerity and hollowness of the Stuart love—let its object be never so unworthy, it blazed brightly for a time; being worthy, it expired as soon. "Therefore," said I, stoutly, "Sergius needs not to warn me of what I have all along known. Nor," I added, my heart aching, "to inflict this unnecessary pain is not a friend's part."

Yet this transparent self-deception could not blind me. "What is he to me?" I say, in one breath; "What am I to him?" is the agonized query of my heart, brooding over his neglect.

One day, hearing Janet crooning over the old ballad of Lady Anne Bothwell's lament, I stopped to listen to the words:

> "Oh! do not, do not, pretty mine!
> To failings fause thine heart incline;
> Be faithful to thy love, and true,
> And never change her for a new."

Its plaintive air and sighing cadences expressed more of my own feeling than I cared to acknow-

ledge. The rest of the words were too similar to be heard without the reluctant tears rising in my eyes. While he, surrounded by Court dames, was idling like a butterfly, Kilmarnock and other able men were toiling for him, risking their lives and lands! I would give it all up. Justice revolted against the unconditional sacrifice. Why was I—perchance, the theme of jest or sarcasm, as a poor, patient Grizzle to these fine painted madams—to be so idiot-like as patiently to endure such treatment? I would not, for in another I should think it abject surrender—and I was no abject wretch, to court a spurning from any idol's footstool. In an agony of humiliation at these thoughts, I helped Sir Burleigh to compile his answer to Kilmarnock, and so severe was it in tone that Sir Burleigh doubted sending it, as likely to give offence.

"What offence," said I hotly, "can honest counsel give? Must your meaning be wrapped in sugar to suit a selfish Sybarite, who, instead of working like a soldier, idles at the French Court like a *petit maître*, and leaves his work to Lord Kilmarnock?"

Said Sir Burleigh, "For once you are foolish. Nay, don't weep, I am not angry, but, my dear, the man must conciliate who would command. These French women—ugly as sin, most of

them—have influence with Louis, and love flattery. Would you have him throw away any fair means of making his cause strong? It may be more than yeoman's service, since all is done by intrigue at that Court."

"Give him his sugar," say I scornfully, my tears drying up in wrath; and so we modified the first severity of the letter to a courteous distance and reserve, which speedily brought my intriguing gentleman on the scene—proving with how keen a scrutiny he and his advisers noted each change of wind or ebb of tide.

"Nay, next," said I indignantly, "he will be coming over, that his all-eloquent presence may persuade us into keeping our promises, and if he should do so, I for one will not see him."

"What do you see amiss in all this?" said Sir Burleigh. "First you rail on him for being at the French Court, now for hinting that he will come over. Nay, Helen, you are Hanover after all. He is a young fellow, and you have so long lived with Menelaus that you lose patience with Paris."

"Judging by the end of that story, 'twere better so," I reply.

"I don't know the end," he confessed, "nor, indeed, much but the names and ages, which I learnt from a tutor as a boy. After all,

confess your only grudge to him is that he has sent neither congratulations nor a caudle-cup to Rohan. Why, the fact is the poor lad is selling his own and his father's jewels to pay soldiers. Nay, I'm glad you relent, for I was going to buy some for you from him."

"Give him the money outright," I say, "I want no jewels. They would trouble me to care for, and so long as I please you in a blue gown, all other colours are indifferent."

Thus peaceably ended the outward expression of the bitterness I could not avoid feeling at his persistent neglect—a neglect I felt convinced was due to some *liaison* abroad—but outward expression is often safer than inward corrosion. It was a very sword-thrust through my heart to find that he cared so little for me, that my life might have gone out in silence and left him no loser, nor troubled him at all.

None, whatever their philosophy, can contemplate their own death or extinction with calm—unless, indeed, a Socrates here and there—and who knows but he felt saddened if he saw Xantippe cheerful in her visits to his prison.

Altogether, I had many hard hours that bright beautiful spring, envying the birds who flew about so rejoicingly—ay, even the brown cuckoo, who had neither care nor shame, but was a

usurper by nature, and for whom yet we would rather decimate the sparrow tribe than miss the least link in the long sweet chain of sound he throws over the spring-time flowers !

Indulging one day in these idle musings, while Rohan, whom I had perforce to mind for an hour, crawled untiringly after my shadow up and down the picture-gallery, I was beginning to feel an access of resentment against Stuart. My heart and my cheeks alike burned, at thought of how by chance I might be spoken of in the free-tongued Court where he seemed to love lingering.

That I was spoken of some way, was most certain. The least important adherent was known and discussed—and that Lovat, or even Kilmarnock, in congenial circles, with their tongues loosened with wine, would fail in citing our household, was not to be hoped or expected. How, without all the circumstances which, if not extenuating, yet explained affairs here, should I be judged by the gay wits and sceptical courtiers?

Pshaw ! thought I, my heart aching, I am but one among many. As this pale-faced and mournful "Mistris to a king" is all alone amid the dark Titians and gorgeous Rubens, so figure I, passed over, doubtless, with contempt, as an easy country conquest, while he kneels for days at

the feet of some duchess, for the verymost trifling favours. This dreadful imagination, my pride being great, brought smarting tears to my eyes, and but for Janet's luckily coming in and carrying off the boy, I should, I believe, have wrought on myself to throw him from the window on to the stones below, Medea-like, to avenge the slights put upon me. This pernicious frame of mind was broke up by a letter from Blount with joyful news in it. Said he—

"For a long time I observed your cousin, M'Causland, was very popular with our fellows here. And, though 'tis an unusual thing, yet, as he is well-bred, and educated even better than myself, I made shift and interest to get him a cornetcy. So now, milady, you may flourish your cast-off cousin in the world's face. He is a fine fellow. I don't know how you came to give him up for Sir Burleigh—for you was not a worldly-minded girl, or you would have left that d——d farm and come away with me when I asked you. I have given the dormouse to the Sergeant, as he has more interest in dumb creatures than me, except horses, of which I am the better judge. That is all my news. I am very well. I will cry quits with V. C. yet, see if I do not. Give my compliments and duty to Sir Burleigh—a buss to that blue-eyed boy. I wish

I was his godfather, or even father without that.

"Your ladyship's devoted, humble, obliged servant and friend,

"TYRONE BLOUNT."

"I am," said I, embracing his letter, "your obliged, humble, devoted friend and servant for promoting poor Sandy, and making me think there is yet good faith in the world."

In truth, these hearty rough natures are what a strong wholesome storm-wind is to a land infected by fogs and miasmas.

I went downstairs restored in mind and happy, glad to be the bearer of good tidings to my uncle. Then walking briskly along farmwards soon found myself in the parlour, and communicating my news, which was received with pride and satisfaction, tempered by a short extempore sermon on the vanity of temporalities. "I like them," laughed I, "and when 'tis whiskey, or a high price for beasts, you like them. So Sandy likes his commission. Why did Solomon abuse the enjoyments he sought out so eagerly—the ivory, the apes and peacocks, and the gold of Ophir? He might have held his tongue. Perhaps it sounds less ungracious in Hebrew, but it is ungrateful all the same."

"Hebrew!" he answered scornfully. "'Tis

writ in as plain English as I can write. An' ye ken there's English Jews as weel as foreigners. Where's the wee laddie?"

"At home," I said, "with Janet."

"It's likely he'll love Janet better than his mother, if that's the guidin' ye give him."

"I'm tired of sought love," I replied. "If he cannot give it without price I can do without it."

"Eh, but that's a bitter feeling, Helen. Ye have not so far to seek for love that the toil of it should harm ye. Let the wee bairn have his mother's love to warm his heart, maybe through a long life he would miss it."

"Why not his father's?" I say, with anger and hate, twin-devils, stealing again into my heart. "Why is it all the woman's portion—the care, the sorrow, the anxiety for the future? I will take my share, but no more; let who will preach against it, 'tis an evil custom to push the whole responsibility on a woman's shoulders."

"The custom of savage tribes, eh," said M'Causland. "Sae, doubtless, said those who served Moloch, driving their children through fire, a sacrifice to devils. Have ye no devil in your heart, Helen, prompting such thoughts an' words?"

"Yes," said I, desperately, "I have two, pride and anger; send them away from me."

"Thus, then," said he, "ye were disowned an' cast off by a proud, furious woman; an' have not me an' Sir Burleigh dune weel by ye, as weel as we could, God help us! otherwise ye had perisht. Doubtless she repented and craved forgiveness; natheless it was a sin as black as murder, as she meant it to be."

"I forgive her," I say, moodily, "wherever she may be she must feel that; but I don't want to see her, or know about her, or hear whether she be dead or living."

"She is dead, years since," said he, solemnly. "Wad ye like yere bairn to feel sae to ye?"

"That he will never do," said I, with conviction. "Do I feel so to you, to Sandy, or to Sir Burleigh?" And giving him a parting hug, I retraced my way homeward, pride and anger gone.

"What an unnatural wretch," thought I, "my mother must have been to part with so quiet a little daughter as I remember myself, in white frocks, so clean, so intelligent, so demure, a complete pussycat of good qualities, and," added I, with a smile, catching sight of the Hall, "so good a mouser; but perchance," I thought, softening a little, "she by so doing avenged herself on some bad man. Yes, I feel that was why she did it. I hope he suffered prolonged torments of

unavailing remorse, nay, that he is still suffering them, and that she is in heaven," with which charitable wish, I dismissed my unknown parents from present thought—for no one can ever completely erase an image from the mind; unless it be one formed in sleep or in delirium, it must ever remain there, either active or dormant.

In the midst of Sir Burleigh's new interests, the news of Alexis' promotion, though kindly received and cheerfully commented on, had not the significance it would formerly have possessed.

"So," said I to him, as we sat after dinner, I teaching him chess, "it would seem, sir, that you are my foster father?"

"What is this new wonder," he asked, laughing, "some of M'Causland's ballad-making stories?"

"If you please to think so. I, so the ballad-story goes, was cast away by my mother, and you and M'Causland rescued me. Is that correct?"

"That is so," he rejoined soberly, "and a very devil the woman must have been, deserted or not, so to have left a helpless urchin."

"Who was the deserter?" I inquired, moving a knight to place his king in check.

"A Colonel Philip Rohan," said he, "a scoundrel, long ago dead. Ask me no more

questions, both are dead. What made that old fool open such a discussion with you at all, to no purpose?"

"He is haunted," said I, "by the fear that I do not value you enough, and rakes up your past goodness, as an alchemist rakes in a crucible for gold. But I love you so completely that were you all gold and gems, with diamond eyes, I could not love you better,"

Sir Burleigh screwed up his eyes and leisurely considered this declaration of allegiance, while he planned to remove his king from check, and the subject was dropped by common consent—I mean that of my parents.

A woman who was a devil, I reflected, and a man who was a heartless scoundrel, seem to be considered, on all sides, very suitable ancestors for me; but Sir Burleigh has known it so long that no wonder the final move of the chess has more interest for him. "Aha, sir. Checkmate!"

"Mighty well," he says, grumbling. "Set the men. I play to win this time, Helen Rohan." So forewarned that time, I let him win, with which he was well content.

In the metrical moral of a French fairy-tale, is told the dreadful punishment heaped on a certain

> "Dangerous prince, whose sable mind
> To perpetrate most horrid crimes inclined."

I told the story and the moral to Kilmarnock —*apropos* only of Verney in some new ill-doing (for Sergius liked long letters) — and he, it seems, being amused therewith, must needs show it to his master, who found time, for all his business, to send an angry formal letter, commanding me to write no more to Sergius—nor especially about him. This I would not notice, continuing my correspondence as it pleased me, though without Sir Burleigh's express sanction, when, to my surprise, some weeks thereafter, Sir Burleigh desired me to write to Kilmarnock only what he should read himself, conveying, however, no reproach, but saying it was better so, as men of the world might misinterpret even an innocent jest. So no more French fables did poor Sergius get, but neat little sermons which he could pass on—as he loved preaching. This I just added as a note, and again the censor came down on me.

"Have my wishes no weight with you?" said my husband angrily. "You are as flippant as a Frenchwoman. Write no more to Sergius, in any way; you give offence to——"

"To whom?" I asked.

"Never you mind," said he. "To Kilmarnock himself, perhaps, who is a statesman, and unused to a gallimaufry of women's nonsense."

So, like the "proud exalted pye," I had my plumes plucked out—and I knew, too, who had done it, the knowledge amusing me more than the prohibition hurt, for I easily diverted to usefuller ends the time before spent in writing. I made Sir Burleigh a complete new set of ruffled shirts, and wrote oftener to Alexis, sending him some money, which he, however, returned, intimating that he made his pay suffice, and that Colonel Blount was very considerate to him, the rest taking their tone from the Colonel.

Sandy seemed, from his letter, unhappy and unfriendly disposed—cold and reserved—so I would not thrust my letters on him neither, and stitched my resentments into new linen—making it as well for Verney. For his ne'er-do-weel wife knew not how to sew more than a magpie, and his shirts were pretty rags when he came to the Manor—Janet discovering this and reporting it to me—which was why I made them.

"Sir Burleigh," said he, as I fitted on a wristband, "is worse than all the uncles in history—ay, and fiction—for he has taken away the woman I wanted for my own wife. Though, I daresay," he added, "that, was you my wife, I should have to make the shirts and shifts too." Verney never was grateful, so none expected it from him.

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision," said Joel the prophet. That, thought I, must be in some senses a happy valley; for indecision wears away one's strength and patience; and knowing neither to fight nor flee, will make friends faint-hearted and foes rejoice.

How much, perhaps ignorantly, I wished then that something great should be begun, some strenuous effort made, which should bear at least on future success. This policy of hovering about, afraid to strike a blow, discommended itself to me. Let the Jacobites begin whilst the fear of them was strong; let them sound the trumpet which should call out their hidden strength. Where was the result of the thousands of guineas given by Sir Burleigh for years past? Where the outcome of Kilmarnock's talent, Balmerino's bravery, and Lovat's finesse and intrigue? Was the master they so strenuously served not able to contribute even a mite to the treasury of talent lavished on his cause, an effort to the hard unsparing toil others held on with for him; or were the French dames so omnipotent as he supposed, with their king? Would not Louis the rather respect a bolder approach as more likely to indicate the success of a cause in which boldness must

be a prime factor, than this strategic approach to him?

I prevailed with Sir Burleigh not to buy any of the jewels, a list of which, with description, was forwarded to us by order of the Royal huckster. The stars and necklets, the rings, bracelets, and tiaras had no attraction for me. Mere shining prettiness, that would be outshone by an icicle pendent from the roof of a shed in the wintry sun, or frost-work on a window, was too childish to be an attraction to any but a savage, whose interests in life were merely those of the senses. Sir Burleigh tried hard to persuade me to be a dealer, but I would not. It pained me too keenly that Stuart should waste time on such small expedients. Hindered from communicating my views to Kilmarnock, who I believed would share them, I fretted silently over the sarcasms showered on this petty proceeding by the Hanoverian party—the silly caricatures, the imbecile dialogues accredited to be carried on over their sale at Loius' Court. The most Christian king cheapening a shoe-buckle for Madame de Pompadour or other mistress! It was a weak and womanlike proceeding—better have bestowed them in judicious bribery through Lovat, who at that trade would, I surmised, have been a past-master, and got full

value, being shrewd, hard, and fully equal in craft to e'er a Frenchwoman of them all,

This, thought I, managed by so astute an emissary, and not personal solicitation, were the way to succeed with the brilliant but shallow-minded ladies over there. If in so judging lurked a secret wish to separate him from personal dealing with them, that did not affect the justice of my conclusions, but was a side-issue.

Right or wrong, Sir Burleigh did not share my views, but called it a brave personal sacrifice, and hankered incessantly to mark his solid approval of it by a large purchase, which I as strenuously refused to countenance.

"It will raise him in the opinion of his friends," said he.

"'Twill no less lower him to his foes," I rejoined, bitterly, "to show himself so unarmed. Pure heroism died with Hercules, who strangled snakes with his bare hands; else why have we swords?"

"I do not like your bitter tone to him," said Sir Burleigh, sternly. "He is more to me than houses and lands. He is country and honour."

"Is he more to you than your wife?" I asked, with quick tears that astonished myself, so full were they of anger and jealousy.

"That I will not say," said he, with quick relenting. "For if he is country and honour, you are my life. All that a man hath will he give for his life. Come, no tears, Helen. What possesses you to quarrel with and carp at him? You were good friends once, and I know of nothing wherein he can have displeased you; if you do, tell it out in common fairness, and let me be judge."

As I could not, to him, rail against the French dames, I was silent, and left him alone, in words. In thoughts I still railed very bitterly, and with an aching heart. As a late April snowfall lay in patches in the sheltered dells waiting for the sun to dissolve, so these ungenial feelings lingered for a loving message or friendly handclasp to pass away and leave love reasserted.

The first of May came in gloriously. I was carrying Rohan, crowned with a thick wreath of blue violets, into the study, to show off his finery to Sir Burleigh, and he with his blue eyes sparkling with conscious pride was with difficulty restrained from pulling off his decoration to examine and admire it, when Lovat rode up. As he had caught sight of me, and bowed, I waited on the Hall steps to receive him, and coming languidly up he saluted me respectfully. I half waited, expecting him, foolishly no doubt,

to admire Rohan; but beyond a passing and indifferent tap on the cheek with his forefinger he took no notice of the poor child, who, accustomed to kind looks and friendly greetings, showed his hurt feelings by hiding his face on my shoulder and beginning to whimper.

"Frightened at my ugly face, eh?" said Lovat, then begging my permission to join Sir Burleigh, the two disappointed praise-seekers went out into the park and found some consolation in Nature's lavish kindness in flowers, leaves, and sunshine, for humankind's coldness. Rohan clung to me, babbling of the blue sky—or so it seemed—of the flowers, of the grasses I pulled him, of the dark lake I held him to dip his fingers in. Then, when weary with joy, he was sleepy, I must needs, like a fool, lay him to rest in the open on a heap of brake, dry as down, and, kissing him asleep, withdrew to wander about till he should awaken.

Ah! nevermore was I to see those eyes in life. Almost my heart stops as I record what happened—pen, be brief, and tell it not incoherent as the grief it images. I was at some distance—nothing was at hand to harm or disturb him, and I bent over the lake to see the waving masses of weed move hither and thither with every wavelet's ripple, when a sound which

made my very heart chill with dread, arose. A mixed herd of horses and cattle, thundering down at speed to drink, each trying to outvie its fellow, all possessed of the mad spirit of the spring—joyous, eager, full of life.

Ah, how shall I say which blind and accursed brute set its frantic hoof on poor Rohan, spurning him out of his brown nest, far on to the turf—dead!

I felt it as I strained him to my breast, raining down frantic denunciations on my own folly, on the unconscious herd now calmly fringing the lake's low margin, quietly drinking—felt it in the stiff limpness of his arms, in the downward drop of his beautiful head, from which the violets had fallen. These I replaced with the agonized feeling that else he were robbed.

"Nevermore," I thought, with tearless sobs, "nevermore will you be aim or mark for cold looks, or scornful neglect!" I went homeward in outward calm, though the anguish of the hurrying steps was outspeeded by the feeling of coming delirium, when grief should realize itself, and pain break the barriers of reason.

Swiftly with that dead weight in my arms, for I was strong, I sped on. The old Hall glimmered on me as though reeling from its foundations. I felt the steps evade my feet, and nearly fell

essaying to mount them. At length I stumbled into the study, where sat Lovat and Sir Burleigh.

"He is dead," said I, "quite dead!" and, exhausted with immeasured agony, I placed the little stiffening figure on the table, the two men staring on me as on one suddenly mad, which I was, for Nature seized me in her strongest grasp, and, for a time, I died too—died to all outward things. The shocked and astonished household assembled in the study, poor Janet in nearly as frantic grief as I myself. As for me, my heart felt broken and drained of life—numbed in the strong apathy of despair, Janet, shedding torrents of tears, would hardly be persuaded her darling was dead. The foster-mother had been gone some weeks, or her noisy lamentations would have been added.

Lovat withdrew to his room, waited on by Craig. All these different interests haunted me in the midst of an agony immeasurable by words. Only those who have undergone like grief can tell how dark the tearless gloom of the passing hours can be—a darkness felt, ay, even with the outward eye—a silence of the tomb—an iciness of the breath of the death-angel. Oh! my flower-crowned darling, was it but a simple blow from a spurning hoof that took you so soon and so sinless from earth; or was I too weak, waver-

ing, unworthy to guide your angel life, and a swift and special messenger sent to bear you away to God?

The heavy days went on; the little flower-crowned figure found his rest, not in the Clifford vault, that was too gloomy, but in the corner of the consecrated churchyard, where children's graves were thickest — where Tommys and Dickys, Bessies and wee Margerys, each, no doubt, leaving aching hearts behind them, had their simple daisied mounds. Why should any ostentatious grandeur distinguish one lost darling from another, adding, perchance, to grief that it could not so commemorate itself? I had a white cross made with the one word "Rohan" on it—neither age, date, nor cabalistic verse from holy writ. Many a daisy wreath I found placed there by other bereaved ones, whose woe, less recent than mine, or less acute, could think of giving consolation as well as receiving it. To M'Causland it was a piteous sorrow. I had to be his consoler, rather than he mine, and the beauty and promise of Rohan came from his lips like a requiem for the dead.

In that shadowy farm parlour, wherein my own youth had passed, I could listen tearlessly as to a shade of long-ago grief. To M'Causland the loss was an intense pain, to which he could

not refer without a break in his voice, tears in his eyes.

What need to recall the slow, solemn passing of the months, never to be filled again with joy or youth? I strove to conquer and subdue the lassitude of grief—to control all outward manifestations, but at times the thought of that fair little in frame in its early grave broke down resolution and courage; and though I could blame neither myself nor others, I thought with a gnawing pain and remorse that, had I perchance placed him in any other spot in the park than that where I had first met Stuart, the destiny haunting there darkly had not seized such innocent prey. There must be, I thought, an evil spirit in that spot, or how could he have died there! Alas! alas! why was I not taken and he left?

LOVAT TO KILMARNOCK.

"Our usual fiscal luck pursues us. Truth to tell, I am for once sorry for the cause, though the effect should by right weigh first with me. With this preamble, I will on.

"As that jade, Fortune, misordered it, I got to Burleigh Manor, tired and dispirited, seeing in its calm repose a taunt to the hunted emissary of a hunted Prince, and wishing it

were possible to take its price bodily, without this peddling of jewels.

"On! say you.

"In the hall I met Lady Clifford carrying the boy, about whose likeness we wagered. On my soul, we have both lost, for he had the face of an angel. Being, as aforesaid, ill-to-do in body and mind, something possessed me to slight the poor lady's apparent pride in the brat, of which, accordingly, I took no open note, asking only for her health and Sir Burleigh's, and passing on by her direction to the study, pursued by so pathetic wistfulness in her eyes as now, too late, haunts me.

"Will you not, it seemed to say, bestow a friendly word on this poor child? I even fancy she sighed as I turned coldly from them. It was May-day, the boy wearing a garland in right country fashion

"She, it would appear, went on with this flower-crowned imp into the park. From thence it was, after the lapse of perhaps an hour or so, brought in—horrid scene! how can I say it?—in her arms, still flower-crowned, still beautiful, but stone-dead.

"Yes, improbable and horrid as the telling of it may sound, of the two happy living creatures I met on the threshold of the Manor,

a couple of hours saw one dead, while the other is, I fear, dying.

"It would seem that the mother placed it asleep on some ferns, and thinking no harm at hand, was at a little distance, when a herd of cattle, racing down to the lake to drink, trampled it under foot.

"Sergius, believe me, I had the rather my money measures had failed than this happened, as I had no real ill-will to milady—only a momentary design to slight her pride—a pox possess me! What had I to do to hurt her? for she was good enough to us whilst here. I must write later on of the money, all at present here being mourning and despair. Make it out as easily as you can over there, as 'tis no use his coming at this juncture—put it upon some fever or convulsion, such as kills so many. I possessed you with the true story of it, but alter my text to any most convenient one, and I will subscribe to your correction.

"Sir Burleigh is in such close waiting on the despairing girl, that but for his imploring me to remain till he has leisure to confer with me, and knowing how important an end such conference may have, I should ere now have taken leave.

"Trust me, Sergius, I wish you in my shoes,

for I like not the task of writing of this accident to those whom it may concern in France. Do you therefore pave the way for it.

"I have just been to look my last at the little laddie. The dead violets still crown his head, and his wide-open blue eyes have a smile in them. I did not know till then that I truly had a heart. Thus I found it. Something touched my hand as I gazed, and the beautiful ghost, it might have seemed, of Dame Clifford said, in a tone of heartrending woe, 'Do not look coldly on him now!'

"'Madam,' I said, taking her hand—and then, believe me or not, not another word would out for a lump in my throat; beseech you call me a fool when you write, for I deserve it.

"It is, you will say of it, best so. Yet must I needs, like an ass, relent so far, having just seen her pass, spirit-like, along the hall, as ask you to induce him to write a condolence. Doubtless he might, unprompted, do so, yet let it not be perfunctory or formal.

"There, I have done. What is one dame to me more than another? And a pretty business, say you, is Lovat taking up with now. Consoler-general would be too wholesale a trade with a principal of such wide views of commerce.

"Write to me here. Be wary how your com-

munication to him is made. So much depends on his mood. At one time a flower from the Marquise B. will out outweigh it, at another Earth would be too light to put against it in the scale. Remembering her, you will not find it hard that my letter is of little else, You could not yourself fail to feel for her. So will you not fail to pardon this, if only for discovering what few suspect, that there is a heart in your humble obliged servant,

"LOVAT."

Autumn, wrapped weed-like in its grey mists, crept upon us, bringing some degree with it of enforced resignation. It was a cold and dreary season. The damp dead leaves fell sullenly on the wet earth. The rains came down heavily, making large fires in our living-rooms acceptable. To the languor of ill-health, the despondency of grief—a little blunted now by time.

Kilmarnock, for all his business, had made a shift to come and stay with us for some shooting. Of this I was very glad on Sir Burleigh's account, who had been sympathy itself to me in my bitter woe and bereavement. I had not strength or stoicism completely to cast it aside —the grief for Rohan. It clung to me the more that I had none to share it. All the sympathy

was for me. I craved it to be a lament for him. This Kilmarnock divined, and his gently-expressed pity was inexpressibly soothing. "Why," said he, "wish so sweet a life prolonged on earth? He was of the angels—too finely strung, too sensitive to render the toil and fret of life to be wished for him. And"—(for I had told him of Lovat)—"if you could so ill brook a trifling neglect of him from Lovat, how would your heart have been wrung when others showed cold indifference, rooted where love should be? Believe me, dear Lady Clifford, sorrow as I do for you, the angels have now their own. Even Lovat said he was beautiful as one. See, here is his own letter. He meant little by his apparent coldness. Do not be too grieved—everything on that day magnifies itself to you. Yet you cannot wish any being so lovely a destiny on this earth; believe me he is with the innocents of all time—happy for all time, and there you will again meet with him."

"No," said I, through blinding tears, "I am too wicked, too— Ah, do not talk to me, Sergius, you would not if you knew the wicked wretch I am, the unhappy, unrepentant——"

"Should I not?" said he. "Helen—let me call you so—beseech you, do not weep. I wish to

God I could bear this grief for you! share it, lighten it; my heart aches to see it; yet I am helpless to convey to you my true sympathy."

I am sure his heartache was for his master's callous indifference, which he knew distressed me almost beyond hope of comfort, his letters being for the most part peevish reminders of the want of the cause for money. Money was the key-note of his scrawled replies to Sergius' advices. To me months since he had writ a formal condolence, every letter of which was a separate agony; even Sergius was entrusted with no letter, no message; he had simply bidden him deliver to Sir Burleigh and to me together, a cold and stately expression of sympathy at our loss. This, if for policy, was thrown away—a line to me, a kind word, would not imperil aught, yet he withheld them.

It is cruel, I thought with a shudder, as withholding water from the dying. He must know how I faint and grope along beside this new grave, how dark the shadowy wings of this death, yet—yet he will not even bid me take comfort, tell me he too is struck, he too grieves. Would I too had died with Rohan, been now at peace, his beautiful head on my breast, my arms about him even in the grave, unheeding human cruelty!

"I hate him for this heartlessness," said Sergius, bitterly, "it is not that he cannot feel, or has a heart of stone, but he puts away bygone emotions like old letters. This he will one day disinter, and doubtless weep over, when his French affairs allow him to think of it or of you. Believe me, Helen, I know him but too well."

"Don't let us misjudge him," I reply, sorrowfully, "his French affairs may be very important to the cause, while here I have but myself to think of and pity; perhaps I ought rather to pity him, to keep a better mind towards him; but he would forgive me, for grief is blind to all save itself."

"Forgive you!" said Sergius, indignantly. "Could I speak my mind to him he should find it hard to forgive me, I would say that should rive his heart and humble his pride to the dust. Do not talk of needing his grace or patience, Helen, or you will drive me beside myself when I meet him and think of his cruelty to you. When I call you Helen, forgive me, it is always as Helen I think of you: the beautiful Helen Rohan, the gracious and graceful Helen Clifford, are both to my thoughts one sweet and haunting Helen."

"Sergius," said I, smiling at his earnestness, "I am very glad of your friendship, you are

only too good to be my friend, yet plain country-folk only think of their wives by their Christian names. So should you, courtier though you be."

"Allowed," said he, "and quite right, yet give me this privilege for friendship's sake, for I am most truly your friend, Lady Clifford. Helen, let it be so, or I must think you condemn me and despise my friendship."

At this thought his brow lowered, his eyes grew dark and angry; he was, I knew, comparing the prohibition I had just expressed with my acceptance of his friendship, and thinking it hard to be so one-sided a compact.

"I will be just," said I, aloud, "nor claim the privilege of calling you Sergius. I will Milord Kilmarnock you."

"That you shall not," said he; "whatever your decision, I will answer to no name but Sergius in this house; but, Helen, if you grant me my request, do not judge me such a clown to use it without discretion. It is but to feel justified in very occasionally calling you by it, as now—when none can be offended."

"Very well, then," said I, indifferently, "Helen be it, only give no occasion for comment."

"For what Piers Plowman do you take me?"

he demanded, "that I should do so, or need such an admonition."

"Tell me," said I, amused with his vehemence and willing to amuse him with idle chat, "have you ever been in love—truly and earnestly, I mean?"

He flushed darkly, "Only once," said he, slowly. "Why do you ask, Lady Clifford, that is surely a cruel sport?"

"I like to be cruel," said I, "I want to know if statesmen really ever love like Corydon and Phyllis in that golden-age sort of manner. It seems incredible that they can; but a statesman! Shakespere has never drawn a statesman's love."

"Marc Antony," said he, promptly.

"No, that's not fair. He was a king. I mean a statesman, pure and simple."

Kilmarnock thought for a time.

"Suffolk," said he, "and Queen Margaret."

"Disallowed, he was a soldier."

"Ay! and a statesman, too. You cannot disallow him. 'By devilish policy art thou grown great.' So unless you want an exemplar like Wolsey, who was a Churchman—or to come to the present and choose Thomas Pelham, who loves only himself, and is a semi-idiot—you must agree to unite soldier with statesman. Yet, truly, there are but few recorded instances,

as you say, of the loves of statesmen. The habit of policy is so great, they can, in appearance, soar above our general weakness and frailty. Yet cannot you imagine, Lady Clifford, that the love of a powerful mind must necessarily be truer and more intense than that mediocrity can offer?"

"Yes," said I, "except that, where ambition rules, all else must be subordinate to it, subdued by it."

"If it be judged by mere outward expression it may seem so. They may not write sonnets, and all that sort of thing, like an idler, yet may feel ten times more—ay, a hundred times."

I sighed over this idle discussion. "Love," I said, "is like the wind blowing where it listeth, of what use to try and frame rules for it? It but occurred to me that a busy life kept it at bay, and the active workers of the world free from its torments, while the idlers or drones suffered its stings, its banishment and its death."

Listlessly I looked out on the gathering shadows, on the fast driving rain, on the cold and the gloom; then within on the beauty and luxury of the room we were in—the soft firelight, the panelled cedar walls and silk curtains, the handsome intellectual face of Kilmarnock, a little eager in defence of his order. Lest thought should turn to pain, I proposed to join Sir Burleigh in

the study and resume our discussion on lovers. Some of these more modern exemplars we held in a drawer full of miniatures, given to different Cliffords at different epochs. These we ranged on the study table, and each picked our special fancy from the faces. Sir Burleigh, holding the names and histories, enlightened us on them on more points than one, and we found by this measure that, taking an average, beauty was by no means the chief factor in ill-doing, or that featureless mediocrity excluded the charm that wins hearts. One man—as harsh-featured as a Poland bear—had three mistresses, each as sweet-looking as a Grace; while another, a very Strephon for beauty, died for love of a hard-hearted Miss Betty. Getting to the end of the list, amid much mirth at their various destinies, Sir Burleigh, placing his arm round my neck, bid Kilmarnock declare if he saw any unreason in a sweet summer rose growing in a chink of an old wall?"

"None," said Kilmarnock gravely, "unless," he added, "it prove a temptation to unreasoning youth to snatch it thence."

"That," said Sir Burleigh, "must be risked; but there is such a thing in Nature as a rose growing by slow degrees too high out of reach for predatory hands. And thus," said he, "has my rose grown."

In my heart I thanked him, and reached down his tall head for a kiss, feeling that to grow to the height of his great love and tender patience was indeed to mock at marauders.

Sergius said nothing, he was carefully placing the ivory portraits in their order in the drawer, till, coming to the "Strephon," he remarked, pausing over it, "This of them all is the most unlike anyone I know. Men there are in plenty who would live for a woman; but of men who would die, or even suffer for her, I do not know one, neither here nor in France, and my acquaintance there is varied and singular."

"If," thought I, musing over his last words as we took leave of Kilmarnock for the night, "Sergius knows absolutely anything against his master, 'twould be more of a piece with his plain dealing to declare it to me." So, haunting him like an ill shadow of curiosity of that wherein I had no right to be curious, I came upon him the next day in the little yellow withdrawing room, inspecting afresh the miniatures of last night.

"Do you," said I smiling, "find in 'Strephon' a likeness to Marc Antony, or to Sergius, or to anybody else of your acquaintance?"

"No," he answered, putting it hastily away.

"My years and toughness forbid any but a death by violence, yet going back I would have felt like him had I met any woman worthy of the sacrifice; but my lot was cast at Court, and there the fairest flowers are so breathed upon and sullied by flattery that their perfumes and fragrance never have leave to enter the heart. The form only remains, and that is but enough to satisfy the eyes."

"Cannot the imagination aid you in constructing perfection?" I asked.

"Who," said he,

> "Can cloy the hungry edge of appetite
> By bare imagination of a feast?'

Or by thinking of frost hold fire in his hand? Believe me, men are willing enough to gift with divine graces those they love; but even a lover cannot remain blind. Besides, the ineffable essence—the spirit, the soul of love—can be ill-supplied by outward charms or art's appliances."

"Then," said I, "I would I knew someone worthy of you, Sergius. For she would, indeed, be a happy woman whom you could both approve and love."

Sergius bent over the Strephon and sighed. "Then," said he, with that intrepidity and want of calculation which was natural to him, and robbed his words of all offence or art, "I

both approve and love you, Lady Clifford, and—but I can meet with another Helen Rohan, free and unfettered—I will cherish my ideal, and ask humble leave to love you as a brother."

"Ah!" I sighed, "I am but a poor ideal. Once I dreamed, if not of a noble, at least of a useful and eminent life—a life spent in high aims and good work. Now see the wreck of earthly glories such as I have won. I had better remained a humble poor wench at the farmhouse, than so dismally achieved a promotion I did not even study to deserve."

"Opinions may differ about that," said he, "I think your deserts but ill requited. To me you are the traveller fallen among thieves." He stopped hastily, for the suggestion of the Samaritan pouring in oil and wine occurred to us both, and he had not intended that.

"It is true for all that," I said, giving him my hand. "Finish the story how you may in words, the fact remains that I renew my journey cheered and comforted by the knowledge that you neither condemn nor despise, but feel for me."

"It is so," he said, "and bold as its expression may have sounded, none tender your honour or happiness more dearly than I, believe me."

He bent over my hand and kissed it, and just then Sir Burleigh came in.

"How is this?" said he. "Still among the Strephons and Phyllises. Did you not know the lad's coming, Sergius?" And, in some exultation at being beforehand with the prime minister, he produced a hastily-scrawled letter.

"DEAR SIR," it said. "As Sergius certainly intends to end his days at the Manor, and hath some few affairs of mine in hand, I purpose—you willing—to break forcible in on his meditations. 'Vanitas' is his motto, but not his practice, for he ever studies a pleasant haven for his mooring. Do not tell him this, for he loves his mask on, carnival or no; and when the pelting of sugar-plums is over and done, he will, with the best grace in the world, take his text, vanitatum, and grope on hands and knees to pick them up. Let me beseech you, be kindly remembered to Lady Clifford, your wife, and kindly received by you, as ever.

"Your loving friend,

"S."

"Why did you stay so long?" said I reproachfully, as Sir Burleigh, in high glee at this admonition to Sergius, withdrew to write a reply.

Now will I fly to France, for meet that man I will not. It is not in nature to endure such wrongs as mine, or to forgive them."

I walked about in agitation, nearly to shedding tears. Kilmarnock palely strove to excuse himself for thus, by his absence, bringing this upon me. "Then," said he at last, resolutely, "if you will go to the farm for a day or two, I promise absolutely to withdraw him. I have that power."

"By some temptation," I say, bitterly, "some French beauty. No, I cannot on those terms—hate him as I may, despise myself as you will despise me—I will not."

"Not at all so," said he, "not the glimmer of a curl, not the flash of an eye, shall be so much as named; there are weightier reasons, which he must obey, and which he shall within this next day or two."

"I am a fool," say I, humbly enough. "Sergius, you have a saint's patience with a weak, unworthy wretch; do not misjudge me if, electing to remain, I ask your aid. From this chain fate has, though harshly, freed me—I will never reassume it."

Hastily summoned from this conference by voices in the hall, we went out and met Stuart and Lovat. Their mention seemed as it had brought them. How he looked or how he spoke I cannot recall—something, I believe, in the frank and cheery style in which he wrote of his

coming; but, glancing up once as he addressed Kilmarnock, the angry glitter of his eyes, and bitter coldness of his tone, assured me that some strong antagonism was between them.

Making but brief courtesies, I summoned Craig to attend them, and withdrew, Sir Burleigh excusing me on the plea of ill-health.

A red flush stole over Stuart's pallor as he turned to lead the way to the study, whence presently through the thick, closed door a hum of voices proceeded, penetrating to the yellow room where I sat writing, forcibly divorcing my thoughts from them.

At the end of one sheet I stretched out my hand for the pounce-box to dry it with, when I heard the door open. I would not look up, knowing the step, but proceeded with my work, though all my senses resolved themselves into hearing. The steps came on as though shod with lead, over the polished floor, on to the square Persian carpet, and there stopped. Though it was broad day the feeling and nerve tension were as if a ghost was approaching. The icy coldness which seized my hands stopped writing. I rose and placed a chair, as we were used to do for visitors at the farm.

"Do not suffer me to disturb you, Lady

Clifford," said he, seating himself, "my business can wait your leisure."

"Sir," said I, "there is an ante-room, or perhaps you would choose the gallery, as it is wet without doors."

"Then you tell me to go?"

"Yes," I said, looking up now, and wondering at the almost ghastly pallor of his face. "Sir Burleigh is glad to have you. I but speak for myself—this is my apartment."

"You were always neat," said he, "my chiefest remembrance of you is of the polished floor of your farmhouse nest, and the cold, clear reason in all you did—the want of passion, of—of—You devil," he went on, seizing my wrists, "you cold-hearted demon, is this how you treat me?" Neither the suddenness of the action nor the tone of his appeal changed my resolution. I freed my hands, and, shaking out my skirts, reseated myself, taking up my pen.

He drew his chair to the writing-table and hid his face in his hands, as though in a stupor of anger or wonder. I went on writing to Blount, controlling as best I could the tempest of anger and hate that shook my soul at his presence. Thus were we when Kilmarnock came in. Stuart then rose and withdrew, my thoughts wandering after him in spite of Sergius, who presently

also went out. I could write no more, and, summoned by Craig, joined the early luncheon prepared for the travellers, Sergius sitting beside me.

"I am afraid, sir," said Sir Burleigh, earnestly regarding Stuart as he took wine with him, "that French ways do not agree with your health. You looked better on your last visit."

"Assure yourself," said he, "that paleness counts not at all with us—we have good times with Louis. The hardship is to get away and leave so bright a Court for English glooms and sullenness."

"Such," said Lovat, "as Sergius preferreth!"

There was nothing in the words, but the subtle intonation was unmistakable. Kilmarnock sneered disagreeably and replied,

"I was ever for healthy coldness over stale incense, else should I be more Catholic, as are my neighbours."

"I like it too," said Sir Burleigh; "give me rather fogs than frogs, action than finesse—Sergius and I are partners."

"Where, then, is the late member of the firm?" asked Lovat, letting his unabashed eyes fall full on Stuart, whose pallor deepened.

"We have none but life members," said Sir Burleigh heartily, draining and setting down his

glass. "No late members, Lovat, unless you are withdrawn, and become a d——d Frenchman."

"Sir Burleigh," said Stuart, "you are damning our allies."

"Being French," he replied, "they scarce need any deeper d——n, but, as allies, I beg their grace and excuse for me. Have they chartered the 'Doutelle?'"

"Yes," said Sergius, "she is a good roomy ship, and will hold not a few men and stores. I was over her some weeks since, and went into it thoroughly with the captain and owners, spite of the bilge water."

"You will, it is certain, 'die of a rose,'" said Stuart, "for no man living so affecteth to be moved by an ill-savour."

"Kilmarnock would be but a poor 'pothecary," said Lovat, "a fly in his ointment would warrant to him its being flung wholesale away, let it be never so precious or costly."

Sergius made no further resistance to their misconstructions, and they presently ceased to attack him. Nay, after lunch I saw Stuart walking arm-in-arm with him in the park over the soddened turf and dead leaves. Their conference was long, only ending when Sir Burleigh rode past on his afternoon round, which he seldom missed. The grey evening fell early.

Bidding Janet cook her best, and Craig to put out the most massy plate and finest napery and china, I, to be all apiece with these unusual splendours, stitched and tacked at a dusky pink gown, the opaline shifting of whose hues was its chief charm, as one while its wearer looked brown as a mouse, at another blushing in rose hues as the light fell on it. This was a new thick silk, heavy and lustreless, with lace which I felt no French dame could rival, on the neck and bosom, forming a filmy web, wherein I placed a bunch of palest pink roses, buds, thorns, and all, fastening them there with diamond-head pins; pink slippers and a Watteau fan, I had, too, and a cluster of rose-diamonds in my bronze-coloured hair. My misery should not wear mourning. For the first time I felt foolish and French enough to be vain. If, as he had said, all my doings were based on reason, reason good it was that he should not think me in despair for his desertion, but should have somewhat to compare to his French beauties, were it but an English autumn rose in its costly lace nest.

Into the warm fragrant yellow room I went, where Lovat and Kilmarnock sat.

"Where," thought I, "is this exile from sunny France?" Soon Lovat was deep plunged in stories of Louis' Court, all which, if a woman

were the theme, as was mostly the case, ending obligingly. "But I know a yet lovelier lady than she."

When we went in to dinner, Sergius lending me his hand, I met Stuart's gaze calmly and coldly—he, 'twas evident, was startled and perplexed at the country cendrillon being changed to a princess by aid of her wealth.

Sir Burleigh looked gratified and happy, deeming I had donned my brightest hues in honour of his guests. Sergius seemed happy too, regardless of Lovat's sly smiles; only our chief guest seemed to mislike the little vanity which he thought prompted the gayness. After dinner, as the fire was there, we all went into the yellow room and sat in a circle, country fashion, round it for a while, till Craig brought in the card-table, when Lovat protested that he would not be for an invasion of privileges, and called upon Sir Burleigh to declare, was not this, his lady's room, to be kept free from wine, cards, and smoke? He even bodily took the table back to the study himself, which interest in me I took to mean an exclusion from a small orgie, in which I was right—for we were now grown so bold that two neighbouring Jacobites came over, being safe men, and riding near twenty miles to meet their prince, they required much wine for

their refreshment. Lovat won some of their money too.

Left to myself I let the fire dwindle down to a red glow of logs, the room was unlit save by a couple of wax lights. I held knitting on my lap, but my fingers were idle—how busily they had knitted for poor Rohan, and even that had been grudged him, the work of his mother's hands! My mind reverted to Fernie's grudge of the knit purple cloak, and now, thought I, whilst against my will tears fell into my lap, she may knit gaily for her boy, whilst I weave only memories and bitter regrets for mine. The roses in my dress were sparkling with these bitter dewdrops, which fell heavily from them—the fire glanced through them.

"Sergius," I said, hearing him as I thought approach, "pray go back to your cards, indeed I am too miserable for even your kind compassioning."

"It is I," said Stuart's voice, "and if misery could be uttered, I am so oppressed with it that I should be better dead."

"I forbade your intrusion here," said I, "do you come to triumph over my woe, which has nearly been death to me?"

With that so violent a conflict of feelings set in that I felt choked and was silent; having so

much misery and bitter wrath to expend in words I was dumb—wishing meanwhile that he might fall dead at my feet, that the massive-beamed roof would fall in and crush us both, that I could escape from the miserable torture, the remembrance of his coldness and cruelty inflicted on me.

"It was so easy," I say, with bitter sobs, "to forget me; yet had one saved my life, its last breath should be a memory of him. Enough," I continued, controlling my voice; "you, sir, are our guest, and the right to a choice of domicile shall be yours. Forgive my frantic speech, I was but thinking aloud, and will leave you, as you choose this room."

"If you leave me," said he, "you leave a dead man. By ——! I have my pistols here, and I swear on my soul that, will you not reconcile yourself to me, I will seek the accursed place by the lake where we met, and die there."

"Die, then," said I, "where Rohan died; think of us both if you dare. The bitterness of death is for him passed, for me it is eternal."

"Nay, then," said he, as he seized me in his arms, "it is no use your struggling or screaming, here you stop till, your fury over, you forgive me. Helen, listen: If immeasurable abasement, if an

agony which rends me of repentance for causing you sorrow will not suffice, I will, indeed, take my life. Without you it is nothing to me. As you saved it, so you have the right to protect it, or to cast it away. I would to God," he went on, with a snap of his teeth like a wolf, "that Sergius would come in! I have pistols here which I took out with me into the park to find a quarrel for. Here it is not far to seek; he is a villain, and has poisoned your mind against me —deny it if you dare. But for Sergius and his stories of my indifference, I should not so have fallen with you. I saw and forbid your letters to him, and being an unready writer is now adduced as a sin against me. God knows the anguish I have felt for you! Has Sergius declared me a liar? then let me be believed from your own knowledge. I have walked about whole nights in the Fontainebleau Woods thinking of you; was I one of your Kilmarnock scribblers I could have sent a pretty post of my feelings, but I never yet wrote of them, nor cannot pen them. Oh, Helen, forgive me! Would you have me dead, too? I am of all men the most wretched and miserable. Overwhelmed with work abroad, the only love I ever valued turned to causeless hate here. I have loved you every minute of every day. May God have

mercy on me if you reject me, Helen. It is but a pistol-shot to free us both—but a dead man by the lake, and a woman, happy in her completed vengeance, here. I tell you what you know—it is simple truth—I could not write as I would for a council of men to read, and I wrote even worse than usual lest it should turn to your harm—trusting to you, who have shown me no mercy at all, no, not an iota."

So there I am, tight grasped till I forgive him, nor cannot move till I say he is forgiven, a lie against which my heart protests—but the protest becomes more and more faint as, leaving me suddenly released, he strides to the door.

"Come back," I mutter, with a horrid dread of the lake—of another death there which shall not be sinless or accidental. "Nay," I say, as his eyes, blazing with wrath and grief, look round at my words, "you should not seek my forgiveness."

"Whose then?" he asks, while tears fall from his eyes as he holds me close clasped.

"Heaven."

"It is but an expression to me. Your love is my heaven; tell me you love me yet."

"You asked only for forgiveness," I say, wearily, thinking how great a renegade to my new creed of hating him I am become.

"That is nothing," said he, "you have but little to forgive."

"And much to love?" I asked.

"Yes," said he, with conviction, "you have me."

As in the water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man.

So no stirring of the water to strife will, when once its ripples are calmed, alter the features reflected in it. I honestly and faithfully thought my utmost efforts would prevail to pluck up my love for Stuart—only to find it indivisible from my life.

After exalting myself with Kilmarnock as an Até inexorable for vengeance, I began, like the man at the feast, with shame to take the lowest place in his esteem. I could not meet his eye—I dreaded to be alone with him lest some sarcastic speech should fall on this renaissance of love. Lovat only smiled covertly at his master's readmittance to favour, having evidently made but little doubt of it.

Kilmarnock, on the contrary, held it no smiling matter, and was reserved, grave, and melancholy, meditating, I knew, a grand remonstrance.

For this, I felt bound in honour to give him an opportunity, and no prisoner at the Star Chamber held so in awe the award of that body as I Sergius' pathetic pleadings.

"You cannot," said I, humbly meeting him half-way, when he did begin, "feel more strongly my renegadeship than I do. I only ask you do not despise me too much; if you knew my sufferings you would wonder neither at my plan for vengeance nor its collapse. To you I must appear unwillingly a degraded creature, upon whom good counsel is but wasted. Forgive me, for indeed I meant acting on your counsel, but —but——"

"Many waters cannot drown love!" said he, completing my embarrassed sentence. "Why should my voice be more potent? all my desire was your safety and happiness; if you attain both or either by another road than the one I advised, who am I to complain that my guidance was slighted?"

"It was not slighted," say I weeping. "Nor if it alienate your friendship from me, have I deserved that it should. Remember, I saved his life, and loved him ere ever I saw you and milord, ere you totally despise me."

"Do not use such words," said he sternly, "I should never totally despise any woman, even the worst of her sex; and that your heart melted to apparent penitence is none argument against your judgment or goodness, to me at least. Be happy, if such is your happiness; but

remember, build no more solid superstructure than a sand foundation will bear."

With which curt counsel he closed the subject—only I could see his wistful glances noting each look of Stuart's, each guarded word of mine, and in my heart I respected his integrity, and desired his friendship more than I had ever before done. But he was naturally cold and distant, repelling all my efforts at conciliation, which were too timid for meeting with success.

The cold and dreary weather had sometimes at mid-day a break which generally lasted till four o'clock or thereabouts, giving us all a chance of exercise if we chose to avail of it. Kilmarnock, who was fond of walking, would escort me for a long ramble, by Sir Burleigh's leave, who had, I discovered, plainly though civilly, forbidden the like privilege to Stuart.

"It is ill," said he one night, "when a man commands his prince ; but with that old magpie, Lovat, here, 'tis best Sergius were your squire and no other—you hear, Helen!"

"Yes," said I, "I hear and obey, as say the Mohamedans."

"They," said Sir Burleigh, "may say what they like. They have half-a-dozen wives, I but one, whom I mean to keep."

In effect, Sir Burleigh, though not jealous, was extremely watchful of Stuart, and declined too much of Lovat's complaisant society in favour of that of his master, who would very gladly have declined his, but saw no safe way to do so.

Then he had the boldness to ask Kilmarnock's good offices, which amused me much to overhear. Said he, "Sergius, you are greatly wanting in courtesy and consideration. A little more time devoted to Sir Burleigh would relieve me of the perpetual strain of his society, and he is your host as well as mine."

"Pardon me, sir," said Sergius grimly, "I am appointed aide-de-camp to milady—that is to say, she has chosen it so, and a woman's wish is my law."

"Since when?" said Stuart sarcastically.

"Since ever she expressed it—through her husband," answered Kilmarnock gravely.

"Sir," said Stuart, "I desire it otherwise, and so command you."

"Sir," again replied Kilmarnock, "I am your counsellor, and not your lacquey. In social and unofficial duties I claim my own guidance and mastership."

"Thus," said Stuart bitterly, "you are the first to remind me of my helplessness, of my lost

estate, chaining me to the oar, galley-slave fashion."

"The galley would get on but slowly with such slaves," muttered Lovat, with a grin, who had been sufficiently near to hear this, as Stuart walked away; "but I will say," added he, "that so far as you can you disoblige him at every turn. What the devil is Dame Clifford to you?"

"I am no slave," said Kilmarnock impatiently, walking away.

"Nor no courtier," sneered Lovat, "nor have not much sense, trying to conserve snow in harvest."

So this amiable trio separated, each with no very good opinion of his neighbour—while I, far above them at a window, Jezebel fashion, was amused at this contest, and liked Sergius the better for so stoutly maintaining his position in the face of that unjust complaint of disrespect brought against him by his master.

I was so far true to myself that at any cost I would not evade or disregard Sir Burleigh's wishes by choosing other company than Kilmarnock's for my walks. Therefore when Stuart proposed to accompany us we neither agreed with a good grace—not from reluctance to his coming, but an embarrassment as to Sir Burleigh's sanction. The old cynic, Lovat, as usual, follow-

ing his master's lead, volunteered to come too, for even numbers—and we started off, like Solway geese, a procession, none quite knowing to whom attached nor how the squadron was commanded. We did not get beyond the lake, where, after a little chat about fishes—Solway salmon and Cumberland trout—we returned gladly homeward, the whole scene being awkward and ludicrous to the last degree, and trying my patience by exhibiting Stuart's utter want of strategic aptitude. He might have managed better than that. But he had that keen susceptibility to irritation which is generally the accompaniment of a highly-strung nervous organisation, and acted often against his better judgment and his own interests, as women and children do. Kilmarnock, I was convinced, loved him well enough, yet, rightly, would not sacrifice honour or principle to him, especially where he judged the sacrifice both inexpedient and dangerous.

I, too, though reluctantly brought face to face with the weaknesses of his character, shrank from the rebuilding of that fabric of faith in him which he had himself shaken to its foundations, and left shattered and ruined, Let the ivy of oblivion, the roses of forgiveness cover it—but raise not again the stately edifice in which of old

he was the deity. It was true, love yet lived, but a love which had suffered, and shed the golden plumes in which fancy had at first arrayed him.

Amongst the oak spinneys in the park, where rabbits burrowed and hares couched, there was one distinguished from the rest by having in it a tree of crab apples, of no use that I know of, save to flavour a certain "sauce piquante" Janet made from some grandmother's recipe of her own.

This sauce piquante, by some train of ideas, always brought to my mind the old French fairy story, where the ogress instructs the clerk of her kitchen to serve up her grandchild to her for dinner, with "sauce Robert." Truly, it was not similarity of sound here, yet I never saw either the spinney or the crab-apples without the whole legend re-enacting itself in my mind; and when one day Sergius and I were picking up the fallen apples from amidst damp and decaying oak leaves, I told him the story, at which, and the ogress's gourmandise, he was heartily amused. A great deal of the success of a story depends on the listener's mood, the scene even where it is told exerts its influence, and even the very silliness of the whole thing might have helped in making Kilmarnock laugh, for he laughed heartily, and repeated as he found

each apple, "Here is for your 'Sauce Robert!'" throwing it to me, who had a kerchief full, tied up, and apples running out at the corners. In that wild corner of the park, on the dull, grey autumnal day, with the slow sullen drifting downward of the leaves, did not seem much matter for mirth. Yet, Scot-like, being slow to laugh, when truly amused Sergius was loth to leave laughter, and turned over in his mind every fresh psychological aspect in which the ogress could be made to appear by her chronicler—a devourer of children; a delicate, mincing, fine lady; an indulgent mistress to her chef, whose cooking she praised; and a good housewife in ordering the next day's dinner betimes, which was to consist of her other only grandchild.

All this nonsense, like a boy, Sergius rehearsed, amid peals of laughter from himself, at his own quaint conceits in the matter, and we had thoroughly sifted it all to its original nothingness, and would most soberly have retraced our homeward way, when Lovat and Stuart appeared, having climbed up the far side of the spinney, which is a little, round, tree-covered hill.

"Aha!" said Lovat, "Persephone gathering flowers. Beware of Pluto, Lady Clifford."

"Who was he?" I asked, not knowing the legend.

"My classical education is the worst in Europe," said Lovat, "but I believe he was a Scotsman."

"In that case," said I, "there are three Plutos but we all know from our Latin accidence that '*Facilis descensus Averni*,' so why, if a descent to his realm be easy, and probably pleasant, should we fear it?"

"*Sed revocare gradum superasque*," said Lovat, "*hoc opus, hic laborest*."

"That only applies if one wishes a return," said I, "but anyhow, classical legends frame ill with English mists, and we should all be the better of a good oak-wood fire."

"Your immediate desire for warmth on our appearance," said Stuart, "implies that we have cast a chill on the good company we intruded into—or, to judge by the mirth we heard, you were happy enough. But now——."

"'Down to the shades, and say I sent thee there,'" said I, inspired by a fit of audacity, the consequence of the laughter we had been indulging in—and, like a country girl at a fair, I gave Stuart, who was standing, stern and dignified, on the very brow of the hill, such a swift propulsion that, in spite of himself, he had to run fast downward to keep his feet. His face was red and fiery with passion when he at length stopped,

out of breath. Lovat shrieked inwardly, Kilmarnock tried hard to seem grave. Then, leaving Stuart to recover his lost dignity, or to be sullen, as he should choose, I took a hand of each, and we all ran down a row—doubtless a sufficiently silly spectacle, and not at all classical, or what Persephone did, whoever she was. But feeling some amends due to Stuart, I was, for this once, constrained to beg Kilmarnock to return with Lovat, which he very unwillingly did, being more than half disposed to dispute my prayer. Then when they were out of hearing I said softly, "I am very sorry if you are vexed, sir."

"If I am vexed it is for you," said he sullenly. "So milkmaid a pastime, so undignified a jest, I would not have credited, from you."

"Are you hurt?" said I, putting my arms about his neck. "Now forgive me."

"Before Lovat!" he muttered angrily.

"Lovat only laughed," I assured him.

"And Sergius" he went on, aggrieved.

"There," said I, kissing him, "let that expiate. What does Sergius care?" So with a little more coaxing he was won to forgive me, and even to laugh himself at having been so taken by surprise. Then we walked home amicably through the evening mists, noting that the squirrels had not yet ended their collecting of

nuts for the winter, nor the last of the migrating birds gone south. We had so much to talk of that all laughter and levity soon died out of our conversation, and but for his arm being around me, there was nothing that even the strictest Puritan could have objected to in our discourse. Yet, in spite of the damp, Sir Burleigh lingered on the terrace to meet our approach, and assuring Stuart that dinner was near ready, took my arm and hurried me to his room.

"So this, madam," said he, "is the result of my long forbearance, of my tender commiseration, of my careful guiding of your erratic ways."

"If by this," I replied, "you express my being five minutes in later than Sergius, with whom as escort I walked out. But," I continued with humbleness, "who am I, to justify myself? It is too true. I desired Kilmarnock to walk on, lest I should irremediably offend Stuart."

"How," said he, "could your obeying *me* offend him?—even he must render a reason for offence."

"Then," I asked, "is not pushing a man down a hill, whether he will or no, an offence, if that man be a Stuart, and sullen?"

At that Sir Burleigh's brow relaxed, and on hearing the whole story he forgave me, and I gave him as many kisses as the other, glad to

escape a storm, and not grudging to pay harbour dues—for I liked not the rock ahead when it took the form of Sir Burleigh, who now was satisfied by the simple truth, and friends again.

Again I put on my gayest dress and all my diamonds. A feverish fear possessed me, lest Lovat and the others should conclude me a willow-crowned Dido, while Eneas could sail away, anchoring in any foreign port he pleased. Rather, thought I, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, would I be reckoned a humble Cleopatra than so spiritless a wretch. Lovat, for whom a natural and artless address seemed to possess no charm, was delighted to engage me in gay badinage, and good enough to say that a little residence at the French Court would render me perfect.

"That may come," said Sir Burleigh, "and meantime she is perfect enough for me."

Kilmarnock, who was looking grave and dissatisfied, prepared a little sermon over the soup, which he delivered to me in the yellow room, drawing me to one of the deep window seats.

"Helen," said he, "do you design to make that man completely miserable?"

"There is the Salique law in France," said I, "by which women cannot inherit titles; therefore that marquise he mentioned must be married,

and I will not put up with it. I have dress and diamonds, and he shall not think beauty is alone in France."

"I guessed as much," said he, "but consider——"

"I have considered," quoth I, "and the story of patient Grizzle is stale. Am I to sit to a carper who sees no good thing out of France—to be for ever the humble, poor wretch who saved his life, and then courtesied her way back to obscurity? If I am to suffer, so shall he. To judge by glitter is to grieve at the loss of a glittering nothing—let him, then, grieve till France consoles him."

All this wrath was, that from malevolence, as I judged it, he gave to Sir Burleigh an eulogium on a French lady, whom he described as perfect in person, manner, and wit.

"Indeed, I am very unhappy," I continued, becoming despondent, as Kilmarnock was grave nor inclined to smile at my petulance, and "he knows it, and goads on my mind to these extreme moods at his pleasure. Would it please you to torment your friend?"

"No," said Sergius, taking my hand, "at the cost of greater torment to myself I will withdraw him from the Manor, and leave you at least peace."

"There is no peace to the wicked," I said, "and as such I may now be numbered, nay, call to mind how Jezebel painted her face, and look yonder!"

Opposite to us, on a bracket, was an oval mirror in which we were imaged, my silver-grey brocade sacque, costly lace, diamonds, my erect head, sparkling eyes, and crimson cheeks of the deepest dyed scarlet, to which paint would have seemed almost pale—and Kilmarnock, grave and statesmanlike as one of the Hall portraits, sitting beside me to sympathize with and console for his master's ill-doings.

A quick fire leaped to Kilmarnock's eyes but I only saw it in the opposing mirror, and pleased myself, like a tigress, in admiring my beauty, and hoping that the outward favour I showed Sergius would hurt Stuart as his praise of the Frenchwoman had hurt me.

Such was our renewed love at its best, inflicting torments on each other, careless of the shadow, remorse, that tracked each cruel thought, act, or word, and would, when we were perforce parted, return on us with desolating force.

To that embrasured seat by the window Stuart came presently, carrying Sergius off to

cards in the study, and again returning, for chess with me.

"The Marquise," said he, as he placed the men, "was a checkmate for you, though it meant you—for, by the Lord Harry, though you don't mean anything with Kilmarnock, he is sailing too near the wind to please me. I will not suffer it—be ashamed of beguiling him."

"I do not, sir!"

"You do; for another word I would challenge —kill him!"

"If," said I, "he will let you."

For the next few days business engrossed our guests to the exclusion of all else. Posts, letters, and despatches, all brought by odd or unlikely messengers, kept Janet busy in the kitchen, Craig in the stable, and us all in the study. For what needed copying was entrusted to me—and the jargon of statecraft, though mainly unintelligible as to its purport, was familiar enough by its sound, no more note being taken of my presence than would have been of any other secretary; and involutions innumerable of affairs of moment passing by me like sigh of wind or the cracking of the fire.

My writing was considered very useful, as it was plain and well spelt, without blots or erasures; and I studied to deserve well of my

masters by attention only to what they gave me to do, and discreetest silence unless addressed —the character of a forward, pert pye being opposed to my inclinations and training.

Sometimes I grew weary, as hour after hour passed in calculations of receipts from adherents, and expenditures on men, stores, and bribes. Thus I learned that the harsh judgment I had formed of Stuart for selling his jewels was unjust, as 'twas a strict matter of necessity. For many ways his character came out the brighter in his dealings with men, much of what I had harshly judged purposelessness being, in the circumstances, strictly the best that could be done.

Whenever, by chance, I could concede a point in his favour I put a dot on a blank paper I kept by me. And soon this fairy bank-bill became of considerable value—at least in my own eyes—for I meant keeping it amongst my treasures, and looking upon it as a talisman against ill thoughts of him.

"I have been a wretch," thought I, when any of his labours or sacrifices was discussed, "sitting here at ease and in safety—so to misjudge him. My own unworthiness has perverted justice, and taken bribes against his goodness. Why should else all these men—experienced in

the world, in men, in counsel and wisdom—be so attached to him, were it not that he is well worthy to be a king; that the frets which now mar his temper and genius, being removed, he will shine out brightly—hero, statesman, ruler—and be universally beloved, reverenced by thousands!"

The thousands did not affect me, but I shivered unconsciously when I thought of him with the halo of success surrounding him, with beautiful women's beaming eyes upon him, and grave admiring men guiding him.

"Where shall I be then?" thought I, wishing myself in my grave ere that great gulf divided us, ere, passing away from our lowly life, he should shine as the sun of earthly splendour in that high sphere awaiting him—and I, with miserable memories to companion me, be quite and clean forgotten. Hiding my little scrap of paper in my bosom, as the sole relic that would then be left me, the drift of their earnest discussion entered my ears—as the sound of a distant sea towards which I was journeying, to see embark on it the one I held most precious, perchance never to return, nor ever more desire to see me again in all his happy life, thinking of me only as of one whose cold and unloving heart had chilled him in exile.

These musings were so acutely painful that my face paled, and mine eyes smarted with the effort to keep the silent misery out of them. To be only the tranquil, busy secretary—useful as a pen, or a pounce-box.

Kilmarnock was the first to note my disquiet and release me from my labours. Escaping into the wild damp park, the freshness and stability of Nature refreshed and a little reassured me—aided by some tears, which I soon dried.

"Rohan is dead," thought I, glad for the first time that it was so, that he was for ever spared the frets and anguish of earthly love and sorrow.

Speeding on, I entered the little churchyard, whose gloomy yews neither hid nor darkened the little daisied mound where he lay. To many it would have seemed but a desolate spot, lying far away from all dwellings in its seclusion, in the remoteness of the park's farthest boundaries. To me it was as the gate through which Rohan had passed to heaven,—the sepulchre whence, untouched by corruption, he had ascended to other bright and happy spirits. Tears fell, indeed, but in painless and happy showers, rejoicing over his enfranchisement from my sorrows. I sat on the grave, caressing with my hand the sunlit twig and thinking happy and melancholy thoughts—

all the bright ones for him, as here the sunlight fell; the dark yew shades for myself. Relieved and comforted by weeping and solitude, and yet more by that kind and partial mother, Earth—who soothes away grief by her calm and happy aspect, who seems to point out that all our passions end at last in absolute rest, in her all-embracing, all-comforting arms—I was about returning on my steps, when looking up I saw Stuart. Instantly, some very worldly anger fired my breast. How could he, how dared he, track my steps to this one sacred haven?

"I will come to you," I said, waving him back as he was advancing, "do not come here."

"Why not?" said he, in quick and petulant anger. "May I not see the child's grave? Am I so unworthy, that, after being denied even the mention of him, my footstep—though in God knows as much grief as yours—is pollution to his tomb?"

"Do not come," I repeated, trembling. "Why should you, who cared not for his life—or his death?"

"You dare not say so," said he in wrath, seizing my arm fiercely—"dare to say I cared little for his life. I counted the very hours when I should see him; I knew his very look and tone. Not from you, who were, as ever, cruel and un-

natural, but from others—others who, less for pay than from commiseration, wrote what your facile pen thought too troublesome a task, too dangerous a duty—you would hazard nothing, let me suffer as I might. In everything I spared, pitied, planned for you, lest even your pride should be touched by the knowledge that I was kept informed of what concerned me equally with yourself. If, through your own fault, you have thought me hard and unnatural, what have I not thought *you?* I have stamped on a stone and judged it softer than your heart, as month after month passed over without a word from you. Was I to force confidences from you—to fight hopelessly against the ice of your cold, reserved nature? From many another, I avow it, I have received unkindness; from you, the strange, persistent cruelty of a demon. I guessed, when your face paled, and you went so quietly from amongst us, that some agony, you would neither share nor confess, was working in your brain—for of heart you have none—and followed at all risks; for, bad as you judge me, I love you with ten thousand times ten thousand greater love than yours for me. Everything you hear of me—every puerile conceit of Kilmarnock's brain concerning me—is, to you, of tenfold more value as attestation of my baseness,

than aught I can say or do will modify or remove."

"Let it be so; I am weary of contention; but you shall have reason for reason—for the decline of my love—so warmly, passionately as I loved."

"Nay," said he, relenting, "as I love you." And, ceasing to rave, he took me in his arms, unsaying, with tears, all the hard accusations he had brought against me; whilst to me the bitter feeling of his neglect and indifference passing away, brought a glow of warmth and love inexpressibly sweet to my weary heart.

"Now," said he, "do be convinced, Helen, that though not a very glittering or precious treasure, all I offer is sterling, nor let others persuade you to the contrary. None know my unworthiness better than myself, none can ever rate you higher than I do; but the perpetual adoration, the cap and knee style, is not my nature as 'tis that of Sergius. If I speak little I feel more. I tell you I felt your paleness as you passed me—it took the words from my tongue, the thoughts from my mind; it unstrung the nerves of my fingers, the pen fell from them, and, like any fine madam, I would have been thankful for some water. I hope I had left sufficient control not to show what I felt; none luckily looked at me just then, all being deep in

figures, of which I know nothing, or but little."

To all this I listened unheeding. It was true yet my heart craved for solitude, for leave to think in its lonely agony of Rohan, undisturbed by another's wail or plaint for him.

"Helen," said he, as, escaping from his arms, I knelt speechless beside the little grave, hiding my anguished face in its cold wet turf. "Helen, must I suffer alone, as a mourner with every thought and pulse alive but to grief?"

I looked up dully. "What do you suffer?" I asked, not ironically, not angrily, forgetting his claimed property in my sorrow, that had been so bitter to bear alone, yet that now I could not share.

"I suffer Rohan's death," said he sternly. "I suffer so intensely a fiend might show some pity. I suffer through your sorrow—ask yourself, could even a passing stranger view this scene without an aching heart? Helen, my darling, let me comfort you."

I rose stumblingly, tears were in his eyes, his voice. In his arms I wept too—all the hidden canker of grief caused by his silence melting, soothed away in the tender pressure of his arms, the gentle pitying caresses, softer than tenderest words, by which he calmed my half-fainting spirit.

"Casimir!" said I at length, tremblingly, "you cannot tell what I have suffered. I cannot forget Rohan. I—I hoped you would love him."

"I did love him," said he with a gasping sob. "Good God! Helen, try dear, to think what you are saying!"

"I loved him," I went on, with a violent shiver, "but all others I thought hated him. Poor Rohan! but he is dead now."

"I have prayers offered for him," said Stuart gloomily. "But you must teach me your outward sorrow, Helen—my heart is nigh broken, yet you will not believe me."

"I do," said I, smoothing his pale grief-struck face. "I do. Casimir, forgive me! It was so dreadful that you kept that cruel silence. If you had only reproached me; but oh, my God! indifference from you!"

"Come away," said he. "My dear, you must leave the Manor for awhile; all this is undermining health and strength. You shall come to the Highlands, Helen; mountain air, change of scene, love, tender care, will restore you. You look heartbroken. No wonder, dwelling alone with such a grief would pull down a strong man. As for this Manor—— Helen," he interrupted himself, "I will make you a promise,

you think me hard, unloving—judge. Think first, what I am; what it signifies; all the temptations that, in the event of my success, will be acting against this promise of mine. Yet, on my honour, my word, my faith, my hope of salvation——"

"Stop!" said I, putting my hand on his lips. "What dreadful thing is it—tell me first?"

He held my hand away.

"On my honour, my word, my faith, my hope of salvation, I will never marry while you live. There! While you live you are my only thought. You cannot yet tell what this means. If Rome knew of it now—but no, I am content that you shall take this—all, or any sacrifice, as of trifling worth or none at all. So you will love me and believe in my loving you. The world may be full of lovely women, but none will ever attract me from you. You are my very soul—my Francesca Rimini!"

"That is very nice," said I, with a smile at the fervour of this utterance; "a year hence you will come to be absolved from this rash vow."

"Never!" said he. "My purposes are immutable, and, to the woman loved, I have the constancy of my race—my love for you, let it wax or wane as it may, is eternal."

We turned to retrace our steps, hand in hand,

the scarce subsided emotion of grief heaving our breasts, moistening our eyes, and the solemnity and fervour of this new vow stealing to all our senses like fragrant incense, banishing pain as it then seemed for ever.

Wandering back into the park, happier than we had been for months, he teased me to know the reason of the dotted paper I carried in my bosom, for he it seems had watched its manufacture unknown to me.

I would not, however, tell him, on which he surmised so many unlikely and ludicrous things that I threatened to resign my post as secretary.

"That," said he, "is soon settled. Bluebeard would come and drag you *prenant d'une main par les cheveux, et de l'autre levant le coutelas en l'air.*"

"Bluebeard," said I, with a sigh, "had Fatima in less estimate than I am held in; besides, to tell truth, I feel out of place amongst so many profound thinkers, though only a humble hand to transcribe their thoughts."

"Is not the fact of being inspiration to two of them to do their ablest and best, enough?" he asked. "Have I not told you that I feel your presence to my finger-tips, and knowing you safe, can give my thoughts to business?—when, were you not there, though Solomon himself

planned or spoke, he would gain but half my attention. 'Where is she?' would be in my mind, 'and how engaged? to whom writing? in what coil of mischief? in some danger, perhaps, wondering at my long absence, thinking hard thoughts of me, laying up treasures of reproach, avoidance, coldness?' Whereas, while I can see you usefully employed, and helping us as the mouse helped the lion—the lion is happy in his net, and not at all longing for the final freedom which will give him other interests, though none so near or so dear."

"And the other?" said I, "you named two."

"Now tell me," said he, coming from a reverie of a minute, "why you like Kilmarnock? He is a grave old fellow, fond of restraint and ceremony, not over indulgent to wit, if it include special malice. He certainly preaches, which is, perchance, one reason for a woman's liking, as they think it an easy step to win heaven by listening to egotistical monologues—a penance no man would do to gain the seventh heaven. Then Sergius has a way of seeming to take special interest in any lady who is nearest, let the far ones have never so great claim on him. And, again, he is a flatterer! He thinks you are certain to know of your own beauty, but doubtful, as you well may be, of your talent; therefore he

leaves the subject of beauty alone, and hints that, for him, there is no beauty but of the mind, 'which,' says he, in effect, 'you possess in uncommon measure,' and, like the black crow you survey this flattering white eidolon of yourself held by him, and, subscribing to it, love its author."

"You have," said I, "most accurately stated the grounds of my love for Kilmarnock, but not all of them—item, a fine, tall person, and eyes which are mines of light and expression ——'

"Not always of the best," he interrupted.

"Mines," I repeated, "of light and expression, straight level brows, a frown when he is angered which is scarce perceptible as a facial expression, but conveys as much awe as a king's."

"See, then," said he, "I will frown on you," and, in effect, he tried to, but laughed the while, so doing away any awe-inspiring effect.

"You," I returned, "can only be sullen like a schoolboy. Sergius, on the contrary, is dignified as—as an Amurath—at once virtuous and powerful."

"Yes," laughed Stuart, "his power and virtue are, come to think of them, about on a par, but he restrains them both, particularly his virtue. He has no mind that quality shall overrule his actions too much, lest it should excite the envy of less

worthy men. Sergius is, in short, a saint by his own showing, let cavillers and truth-tellers say as differently as they may. There is but one Sergius, and you are his disciple."

"Nay," said I, as, in spite of his careless tone, his brow lowered, and his eyes grew angry, "we are both forgetting the charity due to the absent, of letting them alone, and both, I am sure, love Sergius well enough to feel kindness due to him."

"I but jested," he said. "Kilmarnock has no better friend than I, yet there are limits to friendship which he had best respect. Tall, and fine eyes! Had you said a ready wit and flattering tongue, you were more in the right."

By this we were again indoors, as it rained heavily.

"Listen," said I, "to the torrents of rain, like the night when you wandered, homeless and in danger, amongst the fields, and I took you in."

"Can you for a moment imagine I could forget it?" said he; "but, sweet, do not jest about Kilmarnock; I know you do not mean it, yet it pains me."

"There is no harm in it," said I, "to say he has fine eyes. One must respect him."

"That I will be judge of," said he, obstinately.

"Kilmarnock will always have my respect for his talents and devotion to my cause; but for the rest, if you are simple enough to think he either aims at or desires respect for asceticism, you mistake him. He is a soldier, a courtier, a man of the world, and neither of us would yield an inch to the other of any ground we contested, apart from State matters. I speak thus plainly, as I see you half blinded by sophistries about my mastership of him; but inequality ends where the passions begin, and I can neither hope nor expect Kilmarnock to be better to me than in like case I would be to him. This plain speaking is necessary to you, who know so little how men of the world think and act. Delude you as he may by professions of friendship—and he may even half believe them himself—Kilmarnock loves you; therefore, for his sake, be careful. I cannot afford to lose so useful an adherent, nor will not suffer any rivalry from him."

"There is no such thought in his mind," say I indignantly, "it is all pure friendship; or, if by chance, he should think otherwise, I will put it far from him, by being more friendly."

"More friendly than a *tête-à-tête*, more friendly than long lonely walks with him—than, when absent, letters perpetually passing? I tell you," he said passionately, "you are on the

verge of a precipice; and, by God! if you do not now, at once, promise me to withdraw——"

"I promise," said I, willing to pacify him, knowing the danger to be but imaginary. "Now, leave off talking of gunpowder, which is but an unsafe plaything, and tell me, do you mean moving your queen—me—out of the way of this knight, Sergius?"

"To you it may be jesting matter, Helen—to me it is sad and bitter earnest!"

"It is thus," said I, "that chess is libelled—a game fit for philosophers gets into the hands of triflers, who bring to it their domestic grievances; and, instead of playing, hatch hosts of unreal dragons and hobgoblins. Neither, since we are on the subject, and it is so evidently a grievance to you, does Sergius flatter me. He is too sincere, and I too sensible to allow such false currency, believe me. As to you—you are so very pretty, my dear, so good, and so mannerly, that I cannot help giving you a gift. See that white pawn—take it."

"Fine eyes," said he resentfully, "mines of light and expression. Friends, forsooth—pretty friends! I take your black bishop."

"Do not take him to Scotland, sir!"

"Scotland recedes, Helen, when I am here, into a beautiful, inscrutable woman, who if she

loves, keeps me in doubt and dread that it is but for caprice, or commiseration of one unworthy of her."

"One would think, sir, that your heart was on your sleeve, like that of the man in the play, and I a daw to peck at it—so great a figure as it makes in your speech! Will you move or no?"

"No closer can be. Oh, Helen, I shall die or go mad for you! There is nothing on earth I can count good if you cannot be near and share it. Give me but asylum here, and I renounce all these schemes of statecraft. Every day I love you more fondly, more utterly. If I remain at the Manor it will be my Capua, death to my ambition. Yet leave it I neither can nor will. Lamia, what is your spell? Love me as you are loved or I shall die. I cannot again part with you. You shall back with me to Scotland, and thence to France. What is life to me without you? Say you will come. Can you remain in this great gloomy manor while I am homeless and in exile? Were you truly tenderhearted you would give up your grim gaoler and hold to your lover. As little as these few acres are to a kingdom, so is the difference of our love for you. Sir Burleigh has no right to you who are mine. He would be content so you are truly

happy—and you would be. You have but seen me at my worst. In France, where it is gay and bright, I should show less darkly. Say you will come. Why do you, loving me, so savagely treat me that life is bitter? Throw off the narrow restraint of your provincial training. In France are ladies who have the courage to stand by the man they love, let the world say what it will. Why am I to be the only man cruelly divorced from his only love?—because an old English squire stands between us, and a great gloomy prison shuts my sweet rose within its gates."

"That is very fine," said I, "and might move a French marquise to pity you, for they have not, 'tis said, much love for their homes. How could I leave Sir Burleigh, who has been so good to me?"

"Doubtless," said he, dropping to intense bitterness, "a man is very good to pluck a heavy crimson rose—heavy with its beauty and perfume—which grows at his gates. Why could you not wait?" he went on fiercely. "I prevailed with Kilmarnock to come, as soon as 'twas humanly possible, to fetch you to France, nothing doubting that your expressed love would lead you to me. He comes, and meantime—with that cursed coldness and caution which is

part of you—you have adopted Sir Burleigh—adopted, I say; for that he, or any man, could resist an expressed wish of yours, is to rate them blind—insensible to light and life, to its joy and beauty. In defiance of me, you married him; another woman would have died first. To you it was life—dear life, on any terms. Why! but three weeks had elapsed from our parting—weeks a woman, who truly loved, would have spent as one day in thoughts of her lover; but you—you would not so waste time. Your webs, neat and geometrical, were hung on every tree and bush that rose between you and the Hall. You were ill. 'Send for Sir Burleigh'—yes, send for him, as a Ceylon elephant is sent for to the pitfall! Does he refuse or delay? No! See how sure you were of him; otherwise, while beckoning him with one hand, there was only a word to say to bring Colonel Blount forward. I wonder what your thoughts were as you lay planning all this web? Said you: 'A heptagon will not do; I must have an isoceles triangle—the base, Blount; the apex, Sir Burleigh. Such,' you mused, 'will be best for all accounts, and the man who has gone—may go, for me.' You could not—'tis impossible—have thought me such another as yourself. Were I, how could I yet be in exile? A heart, a sense of honour—

these are the drags a mere man has to hinder him. What a heart was yours! in twenty days to cast behind you the love of a life—the devotion of a heart in agony—to steadily plan for the good opinion of your narrow world! While I was willing to brave all for you—to sacrifice all, even to my hopes of a kingdom! Oh, God! how unequally suffering is divided!"

He rose and walked about the room—sometimes on the thick, soundless rugs, sometimes on the polished floor, where, but for the tap of his heeled shoes, his light Highland step could not have been heard. I sat listening in amaze, my hand on the chess-board, holding a castle.

"Twenty days," say I, at length, boldly, though my heart swelled nearly to choking me, "twenty days reckoned by you as nothing! What were they to me, deserted—in anticipation? Was I to go out and herd with peasants? I tell you that, but for Sir Burleigh, your tardy message would have been to a grave, if the lake would betray a poor despairing wretch giving up her life to its black depths. You were cruel, cruel! It is too much anguish to recall all I have suffered for you. I have no art to set it all forth in rhetorical terms—that is learnt amongst Frenchwomen. I am English; in my sin and suffering is the stoicism of my nation."

Sobs which seemed to choke me belied my claim to stoicism. As ever when he reproached me, the whole past came like a panorama before mine eyes. The old agony and dull pain of his supposed desertion rent my heart anew, and his sufferings shrank into insignificance, though doubtless they were real to him.

Presently, when we had forgiven each other —for such acute feeling cannot coexist with life —I, feeling the want of air, and the rain having ceased, we went out on to the dark terrace, which being slightly sloped was free from surface-damp, its thick gravel draining it.

I was for putting on Lovat's plaid which hung in the hall, but he would have it so that we walked Highland-fashion—I sheltered by his arm and plaid.

Slight breezes played in the dark trees near ; at times the heavy clouds above parted, drifting away, and disclosed a few lonely white stars.

" There are we," said he, pointing to two which kept close together, now hid, now revealed, as the clouds passed or lingered, " there are our hearts, never changing : here our lives, clouded by ever wind of circumstance. Give me one kiss for that poet-like comparison."

" Why," I asked, " cannot men say what

they mean, when they ask for one and take a hundred?"

"'Tis but two noughts added, Helen, and someone made happy. Why should you object?"

"For truth's sake, who from her well looks out in wonder at such perversion!"

"A very shallow well, Helen, where men and women are concerned. 'What is truth?' Pilate might well ask. Truth is to be true to me."

"Is milady here?" asked Craig from the distant darkness of the steps.

"No," said Stuart, holding me tightly as I was for going forward. "Your lady is upstairs, I think."

"There," he whispered, "is truth, and here is milady. Craig may be a casuist, but that cannot be denied."

"Milady," we heard Craig announce in the study, "has retired, Sir Burleigh. There is but the young Scotch laird on the tess'."

"No," we heard Kilmarnock say, in answer to a proposed good-night to his guests, "we must finish the rubber, Sir Burleigh, let you be never so weary of it—'tis no play else. Fill Sir Burleigh's glass, Craig!"

"Sergius is a real good fellow," whispered Stuart. "We have a few more minutes, one more kiss, before that prying villain returns, armed with some fresh suspicion. Now you may

go. Good night, sweet rest, happy dreams! Soon we will be in France together, and free!"

"See if I don't have to pay Sergius to-morrow for this—he will devise sermons all night for both of us."

Entering the hall, I met Craig coming from the study with a tray of empty bottles.

"Why! I thocht——" said he in amaze.

Just then Kilmarnock shut the study door.

"What is it?" I asked Craig.

"Naething, milady," he replied, "I but thocht I had mista'en the bin, an' gi'en the chiels tawny port instead of No. 6 bin."

"What is truth?" I mutter on my way upstairs. "Whatever it is, 'tis not a Scotchman."

* * * * * *

How sweet is Nature! how universal her holy motherhood, how unrebuked her most wayward children! All the unrest we devise for ourselves falls before her calm patience into nothingness. The calm of her aspect soothes away unrest, and, in place of the myriad stings wherewith we fret our petty life, she breathes balm, aloes, cassia, and myrrh. Nothing so truly pleased me, so truly appealed to my every sense of pleasure, as a long solitary walk—even a companion the most appreciative would still drag one back to the frets of humanity—but to be alone with the

great mother of all, is to have a foretaste of a happy eternity.

So musing, and having obtained a remission of writing, as a secret conclave was that morning to be held, I stood on the steps of the Hall fastening my tough doeskin gloves, Beech, discreetly silent, lest I should order him to remain at home, standing beside me.

"First," said I to Beech, as we started, and I walked resting my hand on his huge tawny head, "first we will go and see Rohan's resting-place." So on we sped, with quick, ungrieved steps, and, Beech staying without, I placed a bosquet of scarlet autumn leaves on the little mound; thought of him as not there, but with God and angels, and went lingeringly thence. On—on out of the park, climbing the low mossed stone wall into a solitary road, so solitary that a human figure on it would have frightened me, bordered on each side by broad turf and flowering gorse, which the yellow faint autumn sunshine turned to fairy gold, and on which the leaves, as they were blown thither, impaled themselves.

"Would I were a dead leaf," I thought, "to linger here always, to be transformed into untrodden, flower-strewn brown earth!" Then, with a laugh at my own folly, I gathered a handful of the kissing-flower, repeating the quaint

country saying, "When gorse is out of flower, kissing is out of fashion," determining to take a branch flowerless back with me, that I might quote with effect this saying to anyone bent on kissing—to wit, Casimir.

Not to soil the whiteness of my gloves, I took off that of the right hand, proceeding to gather a long prickly slip, and to scrape a few inches clear of thorns with my penknife. Then, idly switching to the right and left, I went on.

The road erratically widened or contracted, as its neighbour park took in or left out the land beside it. No law of geometrical progression governed in that wild place—the progression resembling rather, as the Cliffords grasped and lesser owners gave way, the legendary boots of seven leagues.

"You are greedy folk, you Cliffords," said I aloud, switching the wall, which at this point turned me off the wayside turf; "yet by an eternal law of compensation, which either exists or the mind invents to its own comfort, your grasping makes a curved and winding way, where a right-minded surveyor would draw a straight line, wearying to the sight and untempt- to the steps—an unsheltered parallel on which the now sheltered gorse would refuse to grow. Honey-sweet you are," I go on, smelling at the

huddled up blossoms in my hand, "the lazy bees might advantage by to-day to get in pounds of new pollen and fresh honey."

Then I fell to thinking of how small profit to themselves was the bees' wise planning and careful work, of the cruel means used to rob them of their store—of the general unrelenting cruelty of the world to its ablest helpers, its hardest workers, its most sublime thinkers.

"Were Socrates alive," thought I, "I would go and see him in his prison, and take him a branch of these flowers, which are embodied sunshine, and smell sweet as kisses. I would not listen reverently as did the other some who went, but talk to him of all my country dreams; and strive, though but by folly, to make him grieve the less at his city's ingratitude, let him think me never so chattering a pye—yet even a bird will disarm the overwrought mind of its poisoned weapons, will soothe the angry ache unkindness causes to the heart! I would," thought I, "take him a dormouse, a little tawny black-eyed creature, such as Blount's." Pleasing myself with these foolish conceits of impossible things, cheered by the utter solitude, the yellow glory of the tranquil day, it would not have surprised me in my then mood had I felt my feet treading the marble floor of the Parthenon,

speeding down into the dimness of the large prison-room, where groups of sorrowful disciples sat listening at the philosopher's feet—where Xantippe, tamed by love and grief, repented her shrewishness, and sly Socrates insinuated his love for beauty in unoffending phrase, as of an abstraction of which he knew but by name, though his eyes might even then rest with approval on Charmides—his beauty dulled by dismay at the fate decreed to his friend. Such silliness was dispelled by a lick across my bare hand from Beech, apparently a farewell—for after it he went off at a long trot, which I in vain endeavoured to coax him to slacken.

"What can it be?" thought I," only two people share Beech's faith, the chief is his master. Ay, Verney must be back, must be in the neighbourhood. I will home and alarm them."

Just then another portent crossed my path—Bill Stovel, carrying a couple of young squirrels, torn from their nut stores, as an offering to me, to cover his appearance at the Hall. Guessing he had a message, I said quickly, "Don't see me, Bill, but hurry on. Go right into the study—I speak plainly—Verney Clifford is here. Tell Sir Burleigh that I say the wine cellar—quick now."

Bill nodded with the silent intelligence of an animal which, having but one idea, grasps it

firmly. He was, it was clear, on the scout, while Beech's timely warning to me prevented my being taken by surprise when, some half-hour after, while appearing to be cutting branches of gorse, Verney appeared.

It was the first time we had met for many months. Rohan's death had brought from him a more feeling letter than I thought his cynicism had permitted him to write, and that I was enjoined to hold as private and writ to myself alone —a prohibition I then little cared for—now it occurred to me as a means of delaying him. He was afoot and seemed weary, as though he had walked a fair number of miles, and had some good reason for this roundabout route, which, after brief compliments, he explained.

"My cursed luck seems to pursue me," he said candidly, seating himself beside me on the bank opposite the park wall. "Seeing you alone premises that no man is at the Hall, or you would have that to say about gorse which would win him to come and listen."

"Oh! Verney," I say, "do not talk thus, remember Rohan's recent death."

"That cannot be helped," he said. "When did they go?"

"Yesterday," said I, with an inward tremor, "if you mean Sir Burleigh's friends——"

"And yours," he sneered. "Yesterday? Ay, missed by an hour or two. Could I but have identified even one of them! It is time this Jacobite foolery came to an end, such rumours as town is full of. They it seems, are at Charlecote, two hundred miles from here, which to me meant the Manor. So off I started, scarce drawing breath, only to meet you—witch of ill-omen as you are—alone."

"How is Fernie," I asked at length leisurely, "and the boy?"

"Both well. Fernie says you ill-treated her infernally;" but he added, complacently, "she says the same of me, so I know there is no truth in it."

"Not from us, believe me, Verney; but you are unkind to her—truly, neglect is unkindness."

"Pshaw!" said he, "she is as well done by as Stuart's mistress—must be alone sometimes. Who do you think I mean? Who?" he continued, raising my chin in his hand and gazing into my face, which I felt whiten with anger at his daring, yet would not retort, lest he should spring up and recommence his journey; but apparently satisfied by my being alone that my tale was true, going on seemed to be the last of his thoughts.

"You have pretty hands!" he said. "What a

pity to bestow one on Sir Burleigh when another man wanted it, and it should have gone with the heart, which by all accounts is not the case!"

More he said, exulting in my silence, for I dared not speak to defend myself from this ruffian, who, so long as he was pleased, would remain to torment me, like a boy with a helpless broken-winged bird. Yet, thought I, with a gasp of rage and wrath, here is another sacrifice from me, whose bitterness will never be known or appreciated by those in whose interests it is made.

"Tigre!" said I at length, "cease to torment me. My health is indifferent since Rohan's death, and your kind letter then led me to think you were still my friend."

"So I am, by—" said he. "I always was your friend. You are losing spirit, Helen, to let me move you—you who was always stone to anything I or others said to you. My dear, I was sorry for you, sorrier than had it been my own, for I care no jot for Fernie Tremenheere now. She is the most peevish, exacting, fretting fool ever woman was; and the boy, if he is mine, is just like her—an ugly, perverse imp, with cursed red hair, like Blount."

"That," said I, "means tawny, like yours—*un otre tigre*."

"That's right," said he, "tease away. It does me good, your voice. That woman has nothing to say, and says it in an infernal whine from dawn to dark. So you liked my letter, Helen?"

"Yes," said I drearily. "It was most kind. I have kept it."

"Don't relapse into doldrums then, but tell me—who is first favourite now?"

"Sir Burleigh," I answer, dutifully. At which he bursts into a laugh, and continues to chuckle at intervals, pulling the flowers from a gorse branch beside him, as though something amused him.

"Have you won much?" I ask cautiously, putting him upon a new topic.

"No," said he eagerly. "And that brings me to say you must use your influence with Sir Burleigh to get me an advance in my income. With a wife and child to keep 'tis not to be expected the same will now serve me."

"What of Fernie's three hundred a year?" I asked. Then, descrying very far off the dark, speck-like figures of three horsemen, which I knew must be our guests, I said tremulously—to keep his eyes on me till they should be lost to view—"I have a bank bill with me for fifty guineas, but 'tis sewed up in my stays."

"Give it me!" said Verney, with the avidness of a savage or a footpad.

"Give it you," I retort, as the figures finally disappear, unseen by him, "why? pray! 'tis my quarter's pin money."

"Let me have it," he repeats, eagerly, "'twill then make one hundred I shall be your debtor for."

"Were it one thousand," I say firmly, "here is no place for giving it."

"Let us home, then," said he, rising, "I am both hungry and weary, and you have walked too far for your strength—take my arm."

This I did for awhile, but he walked too rapidly—and presently, as I declined to hurry, he went on without ceremony, leaving me Beech as guard, who now that his first faithful rapture at his master's return was past, was very willing to be my companion again.

When I at length reached the Hall, Verney had but just satisfied his hunger, and was rating Janet that there was no game in the larder.

"Cursed Jacobites," he said, in conclusion, "eating one out of house and home, clearing Sir Burleigh out of cash, and then making off, like the Hieland savages they are—I wish only I had been a few hours sooner! Who were they, Janet?"

"Just Hieland savages," said Janet, stolidly, "eating your lordship out of house and home an' cash; its less work for me now," she added, taking away the last dish.

"This twice," said Verney, kicking off his boots, "I have failed to surprise them; but there's hope the third time, luck in odd numbers, Helen—by the way, hand over that bank bill."

"Sir," said I, indignantly, "would you leave me penniless? rather return the fifty guineas I before lent you."

"Listen to that," said he, "here's the beggar very much *en cheval* indeed—pardon my freedom, after your fine company I must seem very *roturier*."

"I wish it were only in seeming," I say tranquilly, resolved to make milord smart for his insolence on our meeting.

"Then I am *roturier*, eh? Your superfine visitors have spoiled you for a poor kinsman. By the Lord! if I had caught Stuart you would have been on your knees to me."

"I will be no one's advocate, Verney; but there is such a thing—not commonly practised—as catching a lion by the tooth. Have you tried it?"

"Not I," he said contemptuously; "but I could take him in one hand and kill him with

the other—a slim, effeminate, misproud fool, a woman's idol, a white-handed, haughty, cursed, inefficient, skulking, cowardly, hide-in-the-hole tree-squirrel—a—a Stuart, and all's said that is disgraceful, mean, scoundrelly and false."

"Draw, sir!"—a low slow voice from the doorway. I shuddered. It was Stuart himself, whom I had thought safely away.

Behind him stood Kilmarnock and Lovat, each with a hand on his sword.

Verney turned white. He was no coward, but all there was in him of nobility recoiled from the virulent abuse he had lavished on the unfortunate Prince who now faced him—with a steady fire in his eyes, a calm majestic bearing, before which the ruffianism, partly affected, of Clifford shrank in shame and self-abasement.

"Draw!" repeated Stuart, still in that low, concentrated tone. Clifford stood embarrassed, and trembled, not with fear but shame. At length, desperately dragging out, rather than drawing his sword, he stood on guard.

I shrank unnoticed behind the heavy downsweep of the window curtain.

"Begin!" said the stern voice of Kilmarnock, and across a kerchief which he and Lovat held between them, began thrust and defence, carte and tierce. I know not the terms, seeing only

the skilful and lightning-like play of the keen blades thirsty for blood.

From the first Stuart had the advantage of extreme suppleness. His adversary, though not clumsy, showed so beside him. He was, besides, unnerved and agitated, and under those conditions was no doubt at his worst, yet he seemed a skilful swordsman—but Stuart run him through the sword arm, and again through the fleshy part of the shoulder ; on which he threw his sword at his vanquisher's feet, who picked it up, and, breaking it across his knee, flung the pieces in the fire, deigning no word to Verney, who, faint and bleeding, fell into a chair.

" Come, sir," said Kilmarnock, who, with Lovat, approached him, " we are rough surgeons, but will do our best for you."

" Thank you ! " said Verney faintly, then to me : " Helen, send Craig here—Sir Burleigh's man will do what is necessary," he went on.

" Let them take off your coat," I said to Verney, who now had his eyes closed—and find-he made no objection, being past it, Kilmarnock and Lovat began to strip off his coat. The sleeve was filled with blood, which fell in a shower on the thick rug and was absorbed.

" Pardon me Lady Clifford ! " said Stuart, approaching me, " that I forgot your presence.

Will you suffer me now to withdraw you from so painful a scene ? "

He offered me his hand, which, though I would fain have refused, yet 'twould have been unjust to do so, as he was the one insulted.

" Let us come," said I, " to the gallery."

We went thither. Stuart was white to the lips, which twitched and trembled with suppressed passion, but for a time suffered no words to escape them.

" I could have killed him," said he at length, earnestly, stopping in his walk, and looking at me with his blue-dilated eyes flashing, " killed him!—and oh, Helen, the horrible temptation to do so!—but for your being there, I could not have mastered it. Thank God 'tis no worse! Milord will now learn to be silent. You do not blame me, Helen?"

" No," said I, " 'twas a necessity—you did well not to kill him, but no road ruffian better deserved a chastisement. We met outside the park, and he heaped insults and obloquy upon me, till my blood ran cold."

" By—" said Stuart, " if I had known that he would now be but a dead man."

Just then Sir Burleigh and Lovat came in, both looking grave.

" Sir," said Stuart, advancing, " though sorry

to treat a Clifford as a foe, your nephew forced me into a merited chastisement of his insolence."

"Sir," said Sir Burleigh, "what he has brought about, that he must abide, be he my nephew or not. I trust you are unhurt?"

"Oh, quite," said Stuart coldly. "Are his hurts serious?"—to Lovat.

"Very pretty wounds," said Lovat, "but I have seen worse; serious loss of blood, staunched now—he is asleep."

Sir Burleigh looked weary, troubled, and stern; and though he bowed low as Stuart, disdaining further words or explanation, passed out of the gallery with Lovat, he yet seemed angry.

"An idle boy," he muttered, "as though anyone in or out o' Bedlam minded Verney's tongue!"

"I mind it," I said indignantly, "and in future he will, I conclude, mind it better himself—he has got less than his deserts. Why do you pity him, and blame the other unjustly?"

"I do not blame him," said he, "but it seems likely poor Verney will have no future to mind."

"Is it so grave?" I asked with momentary compunction.

"It is indeed, very grave. Helen, for his own sake, Stuart must go. What brought him back?"

"Did he go?" I asked. "I was out and met

Verney, we returned together, he was tired and hungry and hurried on. When I joined him in the study, concluding the others gone, he first rated Janet for having no game—then fell foul of Stuart, who came in in time to overhear some of it, and drew on him—that is all I know of it."

"It is most unlucky," said Sir Burleigh. "Stovel brought word of Verney's coming, and they rode off, only to return at this tangent. Not but I am honoured at his coming at his own pleasure. Did the poor lad think I was angry with him?"

"I think not," said I, smiling at this designation, "Perhaps 'tis best as it is, sir. Verney is generous sometimes, he may now be friends—should he recover," I added carelessly, for I was still angry with him.

"That is the view to take of it," said he brightening. ('Twas an old hope of his, this converting Verney.) "The very thing most likely to happen. You are indeed my good angel, Helen. Now I feel happier about it. I will go and pay my humble duty to Stuart, for I fear he is sadly ruffled. Yet after all, Helen, Verney is very much to me."

"I am sorry for him too, sir; but had I been a man, and in the other's place, I would have killed him outright."

"Pshaw!" said he. "Women are always bloodthirsty, but for them swords need not be drawn. All quarrels begin and end in them, and for them many a worthy man loses life, and lands—as I would for you," he hastened to add, courtier-like—for, unknown to himself, the manners of his guests influenced his own, and much of his before assumed roughness had given way to a more courteous tone of speech.

Then, hastening to seek his offended guest, I was left alone in the solitude of the gallery. Not for long; presently Stuart came in, laughing with Lovat and Kilmarnock, and all surrounding me, began at once a history of their morning ride.

"We started," said Lovat, "like travellers, turning their backs on the brightness of morning——"

"No," said Kilmarnock. "On starting, I had the bay horse; milord, here, the black; and Lovat, a brute of a nondescript colour."

"Dandy-grey russet," put in Stuart.

"Well," went on Sergius, "these three brutes went on all right for a while. Then every one fell lame—more or less—and, as the farther off we got the less able would our return have been, we concluded to turn back at once—nothing loth, for half our business was left unfinished,

and we were all anxious to improve our very slight knowledge of Milord Verney."

"He is a unique ruffian," said Lovat, "at home—abroad, I hear, he is somewhat caustic, but does not rail, Thersites fashion."

"Nor will not again in haste, while men are about," said Sergius. "He will not want blooding for awhile; when he does, may I be his surgeon! for if I let him off so cheap it will not be my own fault."

"I am used to him," I say simply, "he has always been the same, and Sir Burleigh disregards it—though," I added, "he approves his present punishment, and you are all, as you should know, heartily welcome back again to the Manor."

"Thank you!" said they all, with one breath. "Assure your ladyship we were all heartily sorry to go. So if milord improves, and profits by our return, all that ends well is well."

With that, after a few turns up and down the gallery, I repaired downstairs to set the yellow room in order for their business, and found Craig lighting the fire.

"What do you think of milord's hurts?" I asked.

"Weel," he replied slowly, "I hae seen baith worse an' better; but they are bad eneuch, an' he

is an ill liver, which will mak' them slower to heal, for as it is written, 'The wicked sall not go unpunished.'"

"Is he still faint?"

"He is sleeping, milady—wad ye wish to see him?"

"Not yet," said I, "presently, when he awakes, give him some broth and a very little wine. Meantime, fetch all Sir Burleigh's and the other gentlemen's belongings in here, and at your leisure thoroughly cleanse the study."

"Hoot!" said Craig, "that's sune dune. A' the blood soaked intill the rug. 'Tis but fritting anither rug, an' washing the aik where they fought, an' open windows, an' a fire will purify the rest."

I was glad to hear this, for the men seemed to like the study for its solidity and comfort; so hurrying Craig on, I went down to the kitchen.

"Here's a coil," said Janet. "That I should have lived to see a Clifford's blood shed on's ain hearth, an' a thick Perse rug soaked with it!"

The rug was in a heap on the floor, Beech mournfully sniffing at and whining over it.

"Poor fellow!" I say to Beech.

"Poor fellow!" said Janet, thinking I referred to Verney. "It's the Lord's will to punish the wicked at their ain gates. How else were Ahab

an' Jezebel made examples to us ? Dog an' all," she continued, pointing to Beech.

"Well," said I, "we must not forget that he is a Clifford, and do our best for him. Make him some strong broth, Janet, and cook a partridge ready against he can take it."

"Poppy juice," said Janet, fondly taking down a bottle of the horrible medicine she manufactured.

"Would kill him," say I, secretly wondering how I had survived it. "All the blood lost must be replaced by strengthening aliment, So let the broth be made at once."

"Eh, milady," muttered Janet. "Ye were aye friends wi' milord. An' new frens will never drive out auld ones wi' you, that's certain."

With which she banged down a silver stew-pan on to a carefully raked-out and bright fire, and proceeded skilfully with her broth-making.

Janet was a born cook. I watched her admiringly, and was rewarded by having the basin of broth, covered by a plate, entrusted to me to administer to the sick man, and went upstairs, meeting the three Jacobites, who laughed at my business aspect.

"Verney," I ask, entering his room, "are you awake?"

"I don't know," replies a weak, sullen voice. "Is that you, Helen?"

"Yes, with a basin of strong broth."

"I am not a d——d invalid," said he.

"That," I returned, "is owing to the accident of your being alive. Will you let me give you this?"

I drew back the silk curtains of his bed. Verney, like many profligate people, was not indifferent to niceness in his surroundings, and as he lay propped up with pillows, with a purple silk gown and nightcap on, he looked very much less ogre-like than in general. Feeding him with a spoon was a tedious task, as after every mouthful he required his long moustache dried, and snarled if it were not done; but by degrees he had eaten the whole, when Craig came in.

Verney shrank from him, showing that he had suffered under his surgical treatment.

"Weel, milord," said Craig, "ye are looking jist grandiose, an' if ye shew patience an' lie quiet, a day or two will see ye swording agen, if onybody misca's ye—as some folks have tongues set on fire of hell, an' no Christian patience such as yours an' mine will stand to that."

"Go out, villain!" said Verney, languidly, "and wait till I'm well again."

"I e'en gie him a word in season," said Craig

confidentially to me as he withdrew, quite unconcerned that milord heard it also.

"I had rather Craig, than half the city surgeons," said Verney, "if he would not twist the tourniquets so d——d tight; give them a half twist to loosen them, Helen."

"Aha!" said Craig, re-entering in haste, "ye will to bleed to death for present ease; dinna ye tech them, milady—though I say it, no man in the country knaws mair o' this sort o' surgery than auld Craig. Noo leave him, milady, or his groans will e'en startle ye."

"Stay," moaned Verney, his eyes imploring it even more than his words.

So, holding his hand, I waited while Craig re-examined the bandages, to make sure his patient had not removed it for ease. He was merciful, however, and, released from his hands, Verney sank into a deep sleep of exhaustion, and both leaving him, we went to our several duties—Item: I to luncheon with our guests, who seemed gaily oblivious of Verney's dangerous state, and enjoyed the plump roast partridges of the manor. But then they were soldiers, and all of us were hungry.

* * * * * *

After luncheon, the study having meanwhile been cleansed, another rug laid down, the window

left open, and a large fire purifying it, we all went hither; the men to resume their interrupted council, I to copy different writings.

The morning's agitations and misadventures had passed away from the spirit and temper of Sir Burleigh, who was now satisfied that Verney was in little danger, and safely laid by the heels from any mischievous intention or its fulfilment. Wine was banished on business days till the evening. It was pretty late now, being fifteen minutes to four o'clock, and we had candles. Scratch, scratch, went my busy pen; the men talked low and earnestly on their usual topics—of men, money, allies, friends, and waverers—and settled many plans of differing magnitude.

I thought of a thousand other things as I wrote—of Fernie and her red-headed boy; of Verney's indifference to his pretty wife; of Blount in his lonely banishment; of the dormouse and his instructor, the Sergeant; and, last, of Sandy M'Causland, who, I had heard, was steadily rising in his profession; but who, either from pride or carelessness, never wrote to me. "And he," I reflected, "supposed himself to love me. So runs the world away—a torrent on which we are borne like straws, dead leaves, or torn branches; starting gaily in company, which is so soon seized by eddies, separated, and

again whirled onward with fresh companions, or in solitary loneness."

Some hours passed. I, at least, had worked well. Lovat was at my table examining, folding, and directing the letters. We had continually to burn sealing-wax to seal up the letters. Stuart at length complained of the smell of it, and came to see if he could not manage better, at which Lovat immediately withdrew, darting a quick, sarcastic glance to Kilmarnock, whose brows lowered.

"Milord Lovat is the better workman, sir," I say, vexed at his absurdity in so inviting comment.

"That may be," said he, "but our conference is practically over, so I come to you for work"—and he sealed a letter so unhandily that it was distinct from all the other neatly folded ones. After which I took possession of the seal, and, forgetting his complaint about the wax, he took a stick, and, lighting it, dropped splashes on a blank sheet of paper while he talked, to the anger of Kilmarnock and the cynic amusement of Lovat.

Craig, announcing the quarter of an hour to dinner, sent us all away to dress. I took my pink gown into Sir Burleigh's room, who was not displeased at the intrusion, and buttoned it

for me. Then we both washed hands together in a large Dresden bowl.

"This," said I, "is omen of a fight, Sir Burleigh."

"Then," said he, "while we are at peace let us taste its sweetness," and kissed me many times.

"I hope, sir," I said, "that you will never love me less!"

"No," he replied gravely, "I shall never love you less, and should now love you more if you but remembered that my Jacobitism has limits." With which we went down to dinner.

During dinner I did not so much as look at Stuart, and after, instead of repairing to the yellow room, I went to see Verney, who was still weak, but, having taken more broth and a little wine, wished to talk.

Said he "I had not thought Stuart so resolute a man. When his eyes were on me I felt strange, and this feeling unnerved me—for you know I am a good swordsman—perhaps it was the surprise!"

"Very likely," I say with indifference, "but you usually underrate people, then express surprise that any come beyond your standard. You will be civiller in future."

"I think so," said he with a groan, "fine

words cost nothing, and see what my tongue hath done!"

This good motive for conversion set me thinking of Mohammedans, who are converted by the sword or killed.

Verney had closed his eyes, but desired me to stay beside him, and there was I when Sir Burleigh came in. He advanced without much precaution, awaking milord, who seemed aggrieved at it.

"No matter," said Sir Burleigh when I offered him my chair by the bedside—but he took it, and retaining me by passing his arm round my waist, desired to know how Verney found himself.

"Very weak," said he irritably. "How should a man find himself after being scored like pork with a sharp rapier? I fancy," he added, "that I have been days here, the time so drags."

"Would you like your wife sent for?" asked Sir Burleigh steadily.

"No," said he with a groan; "unless you wish me dead at once, keep her away."

"Why, there!" said his uncle maliciously. "Were I ill, Helen would be my one thought and prayer. I should count the seconds till she came."

"Helen is different, sir; she is no stranger!"

"That," said Sir Burleigh, "is my errand.

The strangers here desire to pay their compliments to you."

"Let them come," said milord with a groan. "It will help the time pass.

So ushered in, Stuart, Lovat, and Kilmarnock approached him, and after the briefest possible visit, and very few words, which were purely formal, retired.

"Helen," said Clifford, opening his eyes, which he had closed after replying to them, "Stuart is a handsome fellow, and a brave—were he not so cursedly haughty, and cold in his manner."

"He is not so to his friends," replied Sir Burleigh. "You, who have sought his life, can expect no other. It was solely his respect for me which brought him to again look on you."

"No doubt, no doubt, sir, and his look was scornful as a basilisk's. Had it to do over again, he would kill me. So would the other two."

"You deserve no better at their hands," said Sir Burleigh, "what had your *roturier* tongue to do, wagging at your betters?"

Verney groaned. "I feel it," said he. "To have talked like a cully, unchecked, and been heard by that starched precisian of manner, and by Lovat, and the other too. It will cling to

me worse than the hurts I have got. It was as one whips a cur for yelping."

This confession, induced by pain and weakness, pleased Sir Burleigh, and contributed to re-establish Stuart in his high estimation, as his condescension in coming to visit his adversary did also.

Craig just then entering, I went out and down into the yellow room, where the three were moodily roaming about, appearing to examine its pictures and ornaments. We all collected round the fire, and soon were chatting cheerfully, till, cards being announced, they all withdrew, Stuart's absence, as I expected, being but temporary; but I, with that earnest appeal of Sir Burleigh's to my love, and to remember how far only his Jacobitism extended, tried a cold and grave avoidance—a chilly response to his eager words.

"I might as well," sighed I, finding this impossible in face of his reproaches, "try to avoid breathing by holding in my breath."

"You might better," said he. "He is a tyrant to expect it. Ha! I am to be punished in that I will not brook milord's insolence. I would to heaven I had killed him! Tell me what the villain said to you, and by—if I get another chance at him it will point my sword to

his very heart. My sweet rose of June, you cannot tell the anger I must hide that you are so unprotected. I would not have a rose-leaf touch you roughly. Yet these men think they have a right to trample on you, are not moved by your sweet pathetic patience."

"I am not specially patient," I say with a smile, "as you sometimes tell me yourself."

"Hush!" said he, "my reproaches are nothing. You deserve them. But I'll not have another reproach you. To me you are faultless, and that a villain of Verney's stamp dare, for his life, say otherwise, makes me mad. Indeed, I am not far off it. Helen, I am miserable about you. It is fine for you to preach patience. You are cold, unloving."

"I do not preach patience," said I with a sigh, putting aside his clasping arms. "Casimir, I am miserable, If you love me so much, as I know you do, let me obey Sir Burleigh. That love is its own reward which sacrifices itself for the one loved."

"Exactly," said he, "but I will not sacrifice myself for any man on earth, for the reason that you are mine. Before Heaven—your vow to Sir Burleigh, made in a temporary madness, is not binding on either of us. Nor was it a fraud on Sir Burleigh. He must have known you loved

me. Helen, I cannot exist like this much longer —every day the chain is heavier to bear. Why should I? I cannot bear the separations, the infrequent guarded meetings, the stones offered for bread. It may amuse you, it does not satisfy me. If it were treason to Sir Burleigh I would not be in it, nor would for a thousand worlds. It is not. He is my oldest friend; but, Helen, listen! If he find a rose-diamond belonging to me, and wear it, have I no right to reclaim it? Oh, my God! women cannot reason. I tell you, once for all, this wretched, starving, illusory love I will not suffer—driven here, chidden there, grasping at shadows, fed on unfulfilled promises. It were better dead, but is immortal. I was happy as a fugitive, so were you sheltering me. Your hands, now thin and feverish, were—ah! I remember them, soft, cool, and white as twin roses. You look mournful, different. Then you were bright and twinkling as a planet—now you are a white, waning star."

"What is the difference?" I asked briskly, to break up this dangerous eloquence.

"How do I know?" said he angrily. "It is enough that you are not half the beautiful girl you were, nor have not her wit nor spirit. Yet, such as you are, you are mine."

"A poor thing, but mine own!" said I, smiling,

yet with trembling lips. "Now, Casimir—why, you are angry!"

I drew his hand from shading his face, which was dark and lowering—a suppressed excitement was in his eyes, an angry twitch on his lips.

"Much good," he broke out again, "is in this playing patience."

"Tell me how you returned," said I, smoothing away the dark discontent of his face by stroking it softly, like a mesmerist.

"We pebbled our horses' shoes," he answered sullenly. "Kilmarnock had not half finished his business; Lovat wanted to get back; I was half mad at having to go—yet we could do no less, at Sir Burleigh's bidding, than fly from milord Verney; but we resolved not to fly far, and came back, as you know, in time for milord. I have been impatient for this for a good while. It will not increase Sir Burleigh's risks, rather, on the contrary, strengthen his position—as milord is now *particeps criminis*, and would be held so by the Hanover man, who has numbers of adherents more useful to him than Clifford. Now, Helen, you know; but that is nothing I want to talk of ourselves. I am truly unhappy."

"You are worried," said I, "about this affray; be calm, dear Casimir! it cannot be helped."

"'Be calm, dear devil," said he, "for that is you, mocking at my misery."

"Shall we have chess?" said I, moving to the table.

While setting the pieces, Sir Burleigh came in.

"Helen," said he, "will you be good enough to sit with Verney, he desires it."

"Sir," said Stuart, rising and speaking stiffly, "Lady Clifford has honoured me by proposing chess, and, to my mind, a busy man who has worked hard all day is as much to be considered as a wounded *roturier*—for, as such, I hold Lord Clifford—nor will I willingly give up my prior claim to him."

"By no means," said Sir Burleigh. "I did not know, sir, that you were here—and Helen is fond of my nephew."

"That is she not," said Stuart angrily. "He speaks to her like a ruffian and a villain, which had I known sooner, he should have had little chance of speaking again."

"Why, what a coil is here!" said Sir Burleigh in amaze. "Are you here, sir, to set my house in order?"

"No," said the other between his teeth, "I am here to look after my own; but," he continued more calmly, "the respect I have for

you I extend to Lady Clifford, who, before she married you, saved my life. Ay, as Helen Rohan, at the farm yonder, when that wounded fellow upstairs pursued me for the money reward for my life, Helen saved it. Judge, then, if I can stand by and see her trampled on, and asked to aid the recovery of a villain ten thousand times better dead—a disgrace to the name of Clifford ! "

" Trampled on, is a wide word," said Sir Burleigh.

" It is," said Stuart fiercely, " and a true one."

They faced each other angrily, Stuart—with that savage dilatation of the eye, peculiar to his most passionate moods, when neither reason nor persuasion could turn him from any course he was bent on, angered by the mention of his detested and mean enemy almost to madness. Though I could not share this anger, knowing Verney so well, I could sympathise with its being held towards him by Stuart, whom he had so basely endeavoured to betray for a price.

" There should be no quarrel about Verney," said I, trembling at my own temerity, yet eager for a truce on any terms; " and though he speaks both to and of me in a way that to a stranger may seem insulting, 'tis but his way, and not ill meant."

"By —!" said Stuart, "let but his way cross mine again, he shall not outlive any insult to you."

"Milord," said Sir Burleigh grimly, "you forget 'twas as Helen Rohan this lady saved your life. Doubtless your gratitude has bridged over the fact of her marriage to me, permit me to recall it to your mind."

For a minute Stuart stood speechless with passion. The grievance that I had married Sir Burleigh, always present to him as a bitter wrong to himself, being advanced then, seemed to him a deadly insult. In his mind the positions were reversed—Sir Burleigh had stolen me from him, and now advanced that substantial injury as a plea for insult.

In my mind I foresaw a frightful outbreak of savage words, never to be recalled or condoned, and sank shivering, as though palsy-struck, on a chair.

Stuart turned his eyes on me; for a moment their fierce light lingered, then a bewildered consciousness of his present madness came into them.

"Forgive me!" he said hoarsely, to Sir Burleigh. "I—I did not mean angering you, sir."

His face, always pale, was white as marble—as rigid. The passion, so suddenly suppressed, rushed to his heart; he swayed and would have

fallen. I hid my eyes, shuddering. Sir Burleigh caught his arm.

"Forgive you, my dear lad, yes!" said he, in alarm.

"I—I," went on Stuart, the ghastliness of his face a little lightening, "I—I was surprised into anger. Injuries, milord, heaped, are more—human patience——"

Momently he became more coherent; my heart, which had turned to ice at his danger, now filled with pain for him. Why was he tortured like this for an assassin?—for Verney meant to be no better.

"You will speak," said I dreadingly, to myself, "and you will be mad—go!" Rising, I hurried from the room, hearing Sir Burleigh say, kindly:

"This fray has put us beside ourselves; we have all need of patience. But, Casimir, my dear lad, I cannot have you speak so to me of Verney; remember what he is to me."

With a groan Stuart flung himself into a chair.

"A devil can do no more than repent!" said he. "You know how I regard you, Sir Burleigh? Why, then, do you torture me about milord?"

"Come, come," said Sir Burleigh, "Casimir, this is idle! Come in with me to cards."

Sullenly Stuart rose and followed him to the

study, where they were welcomed with acclamation.

Aware that Stuart influenced Sir Burleigh at his will, I was yet a little surprised that the latter should reprove him on Verney's account, when he had, moreover, said his say about milord in the morning. I could only conclude that Stuart's outspokenness as to the estimate in which he held Clifford annoyed Sir Burleigh, who had hoped to reconcile them.

After visiting this bone of contention, who lay asleep, I went to my room, and, worn and weary, both with my long walk in the morning and the many events following it, was soon asleep too—in one of the huge, silent, shadowy state-rooms, where hosts of dreams visited my pillow, having no relation to the life around me; weird but pleasant images of sun-lit plains, of vast tracts of space free from human-kind, of brown shade and golden light, all-embracing, and all-sufficing.

* * * * * *

To that dim shadowland came a vision—a vision as of a soul in pain, wandering alone and uncared for, uncheered by love, uncompanioned even by hope—wandering on, with slow steps and downbent eyes, which turned and regarded my calm joyance in anguish, as though asking a reason for its exclusion, a wherefore for its

exile from hope and pleasure. As it looked on me its dim eyes brightened, its weary and forlorn hopelessness faded, an eager yet troubled joy illumined its aspect, and its hands, outstretched and appealing, sought to stay me. "Why will you," my eidolon appeared to ask, though no words passed, "why will you thus seek to share a lot apportioned by destiny to me alone; to bring to my calm realm the troubles and frets of some sphere in which I have no inheritance, to force on me the knowledge of grief, which, alone, would never reach me, and in sharing of which with you is to you no remission of pain, no addition of hope? Why, oh! why bring me forcibly back to detested life, when in dreamland is calm and happiness?"

With a sigh of regret at the evanishing of the calm of the golden light, I opened mine eyes to realities. The light and flicker of a candle fell on them, and for a moment dazzled them; then, when again opened, they rested on Sir Burleigh, who stood beside the bed stedfastly regarding me.

"Is Verney worse?" I asked, instantly fully awake.

"No," said he, with a tremor in his voice, "he is asleep. Helen," he went on, "must you

connect my appearance here only with pain and fear, with dread and distrust? Have I been so bad a husband to you that at my approach your happy dreams fade from your face, and trouble and anger sweep over it? I will not stay, I came but to look on you, and then back to loneliness—for ever."

"I wish you had not awaked me," said I, grasping after the fast-fleeing shadows which were so sweet, unrealizing the pathetic sorrow on his face. "I am never happy but asleep, and you grudge me that; I were better dead, then none could rob me of my dreams."

After a moment's silence, and a sigh which shamed my petulance in so speaking, he said, "Your dreams will return to you again—in truth I am sorry to have disturbed them—yet is it so unnatural that I should desire my love for you to be understood, and returned? Have I had so little patience with—shown so little devotion to you?"

"Yet," said I, debating, "midnight is not a time to come and tell me of it."

In spite of himself, Sir Burleigh smiled.

"Considering," said he, "that I am only your husband, and must treat you and be treated by you with due ceremony——"

"That is not what you meant."

"Nay, then, Helen, neither is it what I meant in coming here. I intended only to see you happy and at peace—being here, a talk, which had best not be deferred, may as well be now, at once."

"I will not talk at midnight," I say angrily, "it is unjust of you, sir, to awaken me."

"Come," said he, "you are not such a dormouse as that comes to, and I say you shall talk, either at midnight or when it pleases me."

"Does it please you then, sir, to harass and distress me," I asked, rising and rapidly dressing.

"Helen," said he sternly, "have an end of that wild talk. Surely even midnight never saw stranger sight than this. These old rooms might well tell many a tale, yet none so weird. To see a Clifford dame rise and fly from her husband, reproaching him for his coming!"

"I am not reproaching you, sir. For anything I may say, being vexed and but half awake, you will, I hope, pardon me."

"I am a large dealer in pardons," he replied grimly. "Not so long since I had to pardon an interference with my authority, which seemed very little surprise to you, Now, if I may so far presume, it would please me to know why I was accused of general cruelty to you, by that ingrat Stuart?"

"If you refer to me," said I, "to explain my own words I will do so. Men are their own best interpreters. I gave him no leave to speak so to you, Sir Burleigh, nor cannot justify it. Why did you pardon him? Let him, as do others, expiate his own offences. Why should I be scapegoat? nor will I, for anyone."

Sir Burleigh, who had been holding the candle all this time, smiled sardonically as he set it down.

"I pardoned him," said he, "on various considerations, with which I need not trouble you —chiefly that this affray with Verney had told on his temper; but in future complain, if so you must, to me, and not to him."

"I did not complain," I said, shivering—for the cold stole in subtly through the thick walls. "If that is all, rest assured that it was but a hasty word from him. Will you now go?"

"Yes," said he, "and take you with me, for these state-rooms are too cold and unprotected for any but a witch."

"I wish," said I, sighing and shivering as we traversed their dark length, the flame of the candle flaring backward from the draught, "that I was a witch!"

Sir Burleigh only laughed, desiring me to

believe that I was witch enough for him; and so ended our conference.

A grey dull morning succeeded the golden yesterday, everyone seemed tired and dispirited, all rose late, and collected together for their morning coffee and muffins as to a funeral. Stuart looked pale and angry. Kilmarnock, who had been for a swim in the lake, was the decentest presentment of country health and energy we had amongst us, except Sir Burleigh, whom nothing changed, save gout. None of us knew how Verney had passed the night, so, finishing my coffee, I proposed to visit him, Lovat, to my surprise, offering to come also. As I concluded this was by his master's order, and Sir Burleigh made no objection, we went together.

Verney looked very white and haggard, and reproached me for my late arrival, declaring the night had been like three, and that Craig had quoted twenty thousand psalms to him about the wicked, "of whom," quoth he complacently, "thank God! I know little."

"All Holy Scriptures," said Lovat, "are written for our learning, milord, and 'twould be little use telling you about the good,—Craig would not carry gorse to a moor."

"Ay! you are Lovat," said Verney, regarding him, "I did not recognise you yesterday, milord."

"I am Lovat, at your present service," said he, seating himself, "and as the time is so long to you, perhaps cards when you incline to them would not be amiss."

"Go, Helen, and fetch the cards," said Verney eagerly, his shadowed eyes brightening. "Quick, before Craig comes in."

"Thank you, milord," to Lovat, as I went downstairs, returning with a pack and an ivory bowl for money.

"Helen," whispered Verney, drawing my face down to his pillow, "you will not refuse me that fifty guineas now. I'll double it before dinner, and pay you altogether."

"Very well," I returned, going for it. And leaving them just commencing a game—for Lovat was also a gamester—I retired, meeting Craig outside.

"'Tis for all the world," he grumbled, seeing through the half-open door how his master was engaged, "for all the world over, 'tis Satan tempting sin. That auld wrinkled carle winning o't maybe a dying mon, gieing, instead o' a sound screed o' Scripture, a knave like himsel', or a queen like a Hanover."

"Hoot!" said Janet, coming with some broth, "wad ye breck his head wi' your precious balms? See when he is around agen, how many texs will ye gie him then."

"Now," then said Craig, with more wisdom than a serpent, "is the time, he canna breck my head, an' it is better be safe than sad."

Janet going in with her broth stopped the game for the time, Lovat amusing himself by admiring the rich jewelled rings on his hands, listening imperturbably to the peevish curses Verney bestowed on Janet—the broth, his wounds, the morning, everything, animate or not, which occurred to his mind.

Listening to, I yet pitied him—his eyes looked hollow and his face shrunk; all my old partizanship of years revived, now that he was helpless. "There are worse," thought I, "than Verney; he means little of his most violent, outbreaks of splenetic talk; and how long I have known him! all my whole life, since he was a mere stripling; now he is middle-aged, almost old. He may never mend, yet he is still the same Verney Clifford, who never failed in friendship for me, let his words have been never so bitter—and but yesterday I would have voted for his death. Let," thought I, "the resolves of frail humankind be writ in water."

Something in the pityingness of mine eyes caught his as he was returning to his cards, and, stretching out both his hands, he took mine gently and kissed them—a more kind, courteous

action than I had ever known him do yet, and with which I was much moved.

"Helen I have known from a little child," he explained to Lovat as he resumed his cards, "and I hold myself her nearest kinsman."

With that I left them to their cards, repairing downstairs.

The day had a little brightened, but the severe and gloomy expression on Stuart's face was not lessened. He was reading the *Gazette*. Sir Burleigh I had seen ride off on the cob, to look around the various farms, and for exercise, which he could never dispense with for fear of gout. Kilmarnock was writing, so seeing I was not wanted I went and inspected my gowns, brushing and folding them anew. I kept them in Sir Burleigh's wardrobe, who, for so rich a man, had mighty few clothes of his own, and those not of the newest fashion, but all kept by Craig very neat and clean. He had, to be sure, plenty of shirts and socks that I had made and knitted, all laid up with camphor, and one or two wigs which he never wore, preferring his own short, thick, grey hair, which could be plunged bodily into cold water at his pleasure. One of these wigs I put on, from idleness, going on with my various tasks still wearing it—it was too weighty to be pleasant, and

one could not wonder at its being discarded by its owner. His watch and purse were on the toilet, and in his dressing-room beyond, was a great china bath half full of water, and the prints of his wet feet on the floor like the traces—but that they were evanishing—of some large tertiary-epoch saurian. The sponge and soap were on the floor, the towels neatly hung to dry from the open window—for he had that love of order which is an accompaniment of sound sense, disdaining nothing as trifling that conduced to comfort or health.

"It is very certain I like him," quoth I, sorting out on the bed a variety of kerchiefs and laces, and putting them into their proper shelves. Then I tumbled out of a box, and admired, a few old diamonds he had given me, which were handsome enough and looked very well at night; but finery was not much to my taste, unless any commended that of Frenchwomen before me.

"Still be neat," mused I, thinking of the old lines—

> "'Still be neat, still to be dressed
> As you were going to a feast;
> Still to be painted, still perfumed,
> Ladye, it is to be presumed—
> Tho' arts hid, causes be not found,
> All is not sweet, all is not sound.
> Give me a look, give me a face,
> That makes simplicity a grace;
> Hair loosely flowing, robes as free,
> Such sweet neglect more taketh me
> Than all the adulteries of art—
> They strike mine eye but not my heart.'

"That," thought I, "was what I felt, when Fernie was around, who would not so much as bathe, lest her pearly skin should get a country red on it. Now," I continued, being fully possessed by an idle vein, and stripping off one stocking and slipper, "my skin is whiter than was hers, and my toes are pink, only that they have been in water and well rubbed."

Like a silly sea-gull, there was I admiring my pink foot, when I heard myself called, and hurrying on my shoe and stocking, forgetting the wig, I ran downstairs.

"Eh," said Sir Burleigh, who was awaiting me at the foot "you have been, you magpie, at my wardrobe."

"Yes, sir, straightening it."

"That I will come and see," said he, clipping his arm round my waist, and returning with me upstairs.

"I am very pleased with you, my dear," said he seriously, when we were within the room; and seeing the diamonds laid out on a pink scarf, he, without more words, unlocked a drawer in the wardrobe, and gave me another rich cluster, in form of a star, for the hair.

"I do not want it, indeed," I protested.

"No," said he, teasing, "you are too handsome to want it, that is your meaning;

but I have yet some more for any other lady, Helen."

"If I thought so," said I, "'twould break my heart; but I have known you too long, Sir Burleigh, and am convinced you are a woman-hater."

"Then," he rejoined, "as I love you, you must be what you wished last night—a witch."

After this, Sir Burleigh showed me several miniatures, which he kept apart amongst the jewels. One of his mother, that I had never seen—a stern-looking woman, with hair combed stiffly back over a high cushion, and a robe of velvet on.

"You should have known her," he remarked. "She would have guided you."

"That is a mistake, Sir Burleigh, "a man's mistake. A woman is what she is by nature, and no guiding or repression will alter her. The ancients knew humankind better, as everyone admits, than it is now known. And you will remember old Æsop tells us of a woman changed from a cat, who, on hearing the mice play, jumped out o' bed to catch them."

"This dame," said he, "would have led any mouse-catching lady a pretty life."

"Then," thought I, "she is happily dead," but I gave it back into his hands with a civil word of

commendation on its stateliness, and, after locking it away, we went down to luncheon. To-day it was turbot and roast mutton, good and well-cooked.

"Did you win?" I asked Lovat after luncheon.

"No, I lost, Lady Clifford, considerably—in one way."

"Why, then," said I puzzled, "how could that be—I thought winnings were absolute?"

"It is so," he answered. "I lost, indeed, some guineas, but gained the inestimable advantage of a better knowledge of milord Verney."

A smile crossed Kilmarnock's face, who was listening, which told me more plainly than words that Verney was to be won over, if not to faith and fealty, into so compromising himself with the Jacobites that retreat to the other side would be impossible. No better agent for this than Lovat. Verney was but as plastic clay in his able hands. I felt sorry for him, now that he was weak and defenceless, but could see no way to warning him—as his opinion of his own mental powers, and superior-to-all-the-world cunning, would prompt him to reject with scorn any hint of Lovat's success with him, though he might give ready credence to its attempt. Nevertheless, in common fairness, I resolved to

give him notice of my surmise, visiting him soon after for that purpose. His extreme irritability, now rendered quite touching by his weakness, made it a hard task to lead up to so astounding a proposition as that other folks could get the better of him; and, on my placing before him the danger of Lovat's supposed design, he desired, in a fury, to know if his mind was pinked as well as his arm, and bid me begone and fetch Lovat to conclude the game begun just before luncheon.

"Here," said he, relenting in his anger as I turned to go, "here is your fifty guineas, won this morning of your dangerous friend. A man who cannot keep his money is very little likely to prove my better at anything else, but I believe you meant well." With which conclusive reasoning he lay back on his pillows, eager for nothing else than Lovat's presence, and the excitement of gaming, which beguiled the dreary time. I met Lovat going to him, and feeling it due to Janet to occasionally ask after her son, and whether she desired a letter written, was going down the dark stone staircase which led to the kitchen, when Craig stopped me.

"Milord is worse than aebody thinks," said he solemnly. "'Twould be weel if someone

sat up the night wi' him; Janet an' me is jist worn out wi' waiting and watchin'."

"You are quite right, Craig; either I or Sir Burleigh will watch to-night."

"I wadna avise Sir Burleigh," said Craig uneasily, "he is whiles wanderin', an' his ill' tongue speaks that a lifetime would not get forgiven to him."

"Surely, Craig, Sir Burleigh is not weak enough to attach weight to such talk."

"Get M'Causland, milady, he is a proper sensibu man—an' besides, it might bring the gout on Sir Burleigh, an' he wi' a' these gentlemen on his hands to entertain, an' much weighty business on his han's too. Send for M'Causland, milady."

"Who's yon, speakin' for me?" Janet came on to the stairs. "Craig, you are doited. Who should sit up wi' Verney Clifford but me? I tired! I defy ae night's nursing to tire me. I just sleep in the day between meals, an' there it is. Milady to sit up! an' why, pray?"

"I am willing, Janet; and it is not just you should work day and night."

"Nor you," said she, "wi' yere eyes shinin' out o' yere face like stars, an' as thin as a windle strae, puttin' one in mind o' a will-o'-the-wisp. I

will sit up an' be no worse for it, but better, for I mind no sick body's clavers."

This decision relieved me. I was unused to watching, and of a sleepy nature at night, being used to retiring early, and I knew Janet would not act against her own convictions, and suffered it to be so.

Craig went on upstairs, and I down with Janet into the kitchen, to write the usual monthly packet for Dick in the usual way, wondering the while what Dick was like.

"Hair black as the shining coal," said Janet, "an' eyes black as a crow's feather, an' ower sax feet in height. That's my Dick, an' fine big han's and feet—it takes somewhat to shoe Dick."

"I should know him," said I, "by your description, Janet."

"Ay," said Janet proudly, "an' but you tell him, milady, that you are Helen Rohan, he would be ready to kiss you, would Dick—for but for your writin' these years, him an' me had been far enough apart; now we seem near an' dear."

"Then that is all, Janet?"

"All," she said. "Ye see I make no mention of these gentlemen being here, for Dick is but a boy, an' shows his mother's letters to all and some." So I bore it off with me, directed: "Dick M'Croskie, 19th Dragoons, Portlaugh

Barracks, Ireland"—and put it where Stuart could see it, who honourably battled with curiosity for a long time, eventually succumbing, as I knew he would.

"Who is Dick M'Croskie?" he asked presently, his sullenness giving way to curiosity, as he joined me at the window.

"He is a soldier," rejoined I, knitting tranquilly, "in the 19th Dragoon Regiment, at Portlaugh, Ireland. A tall, handsome man, coal-black hair, and eyes just the blue-black of a crow-feather. Most likely," I continued, with calm enthusiasm, "a descendant of those Huns who ravaged Rome, when at the meridian of its glory it——"

Kilmarnock, who was writing, with difficulty stifled a laugh; but Stuart, whose back was turned to him, did not note, and went on—

"So this Hun, or Ostrogoth, is fortunate in his eulogist, as well as in his correspondent."

"Yes," said I, "but not more so than his deserts warrant—and you know, sir, that Maximin, the Emperor of Rome, was but a soldier, one of a legion."

"In that," said he, "appears to consist all the similarity—one of a legion," and so saying he walked off angrily, re-inspecting the letter as he passed it.

Kilmarnock did not look up, going on gravely with his occupation. I heard the damp gravel giving to Stuart's footsteps as he walked on the terrace, and thinking exercise the best exorcis of his sullenness, stayed where I was —he had been so all day. What, I mused, was said between him and Sir Burleigh last night? and, if anything, was it just to visit his own want of management on me? Why had he tried to thwart Sir Burleigh, and made that painful scene?

"Why?" I continued, relenting, "am I so cruel, to harass him with trifles to no purpose?" I went out, and joined him in his walk. We were both silent a while, then he sighed.

"Sigh no more," said I, "for the Hun. He is Janet's son, and quite unattainable by me."

"That is not my present grief," said he, smiling, "I have weightier and nearer matters on my heart. A few days will see us in France again, and how coldly cruel your treatment of me is—avoidance, chillness. I must give you up. I see no other way of escape from the pain you wittingly cause me."

"What have I done?" I asked, distressed out of all wish to jest. "My life is wretched to me. If you desert me, let it be without preparation, that I may think it accident or overwhelming

temptation. Why tell me of an intended cruelty? Only convince me that it is best so for your happiness, and I will utter no protest. But if I let you now leave me, thinking me indifferent to it, how do I know that that would not the more speedily reconcile you to your desertion? It is not my place to plead for the retention of your love, but I will not after have myself to blame by appearing indifferent to it."

"Thus," said he bitterly, "you always reason. Love, based on reason, is no love at all."

"Give me," I returned, "a good reason for my loving you, and I will subscribe to that."

"A good reason," said he, "is that I love you better than either life or honour; that I stand here disgraced in my own eyes. Sir Burleigh forgave me last night, as he might a son or a brother, though I could claim no forgiveness, or even forbearance, from him. God knows, had I met you first, married to him, I think my honour strong enough to have resisted temptation. Now, as it is, it must be renunciation."

"Let it be so then," said I sighing, yet with a little malice—for his renunciation scheme, fire-new as it was, and untried, less alarmed than amused me. "You are right, sir; my heart has recovered the pained shock your first words inflicted. I will in, and ask Sergius for some work,

and we will go on as though we were but common friends."

"Why then," said he, in sudden fury, "are you always harassing me? Is it not enough to cause me to wish for peace, though death wait on it?"

"Quite," said I, preparing to return indoors, "but, sir, you are robust enough to render so violent an ending unlikely."

"Nay," said he, his anger increasing with a consciousness of the futility of his own threat, "you shall stop and hear me out, mock at me as you may."

"Is not renunciation final?" I ask laughing. "Why need you recommence?"

"Because," said he, "I never meant it. Conscience put it in my mouth, but my heart was far enough from thinking it, and that you knew, or you would not laugh."

"Grant I surmised," said I, "that does not lessen the goodness of the plan. Let, for once, conscience guide you."

"It was not conscience," he rejoined angrily, "unless you call a d——d pragmatic lecture from Sir Burleigh conscience. I would not answer him, being under too deep obligation to him to quarrel; else might I have alleged, with truth, that he had robbed you from me—not

I from him. He recognises it himself, yet thinks I am to be blind. By Scotch law you are not his, but my wife."

"That," I said, "in one so given to renunciation, were but a slender hold."

"I have, however, vexed you," he remarked with satisfaction, as my head bent low to conceal the tears in my eyes.

A rush of sobs to my throat nigh choked me, but I kept them back, only seeing in the dark evening closing round us a presage that one day these idle, ominous words would come true.

I left him, and leaning on to the terrace wall tried to fashion, from the heavy mists rolling up from the lake, a less dreadful destiny than the separation he could so cheerfully predict.

Utterly miserable, I seemed to feel only an unkind glance noting my discomfiture, and thought how shallow was the love which could bear to inflict pain, or to exult in grief. My head sank lower with humiliation to think that this idol I had raised up was insensible to my agony, or noted it only to soothe the feelings another had ruffled in himself.

I did not hear nor heed his going, for he returned indoors, satisfied with his vengeance, and talking with animation to Kilmarnock. Lovat presently came out for a turn on the ter-

race, having been in Verney's room the greater part of the day, and kindly counselled me to go in out of the damp night air. So, drearily, I went upstairs, having no spirit to resist the causeless cruelty with which I was visited.

"Yet," thought I, for the diamonds were still on the bed, "my lord marquis shall at least see patient Grizzle

> 'With all her bravery on and tackle trim,
> Sails set and streamers waving'

as Milton images Delilah," and reviving in the bright light of many wax tapers, all lit for our dressing, I arrayed myself with so much care as to draw upon me Sir Burleigh's notice, who usually scarce considered what I wore or how, so only I was in the gowns.

"Why, Helen!" he remarked. "What is this Queen of Sheba business to-night?"

"'Tis," said I, "that high-born men, used to the French Court, may not conclude that they sit to dine with a milkmaid, sir."

"As you please," he laughed, "but as jewels are in favour to-night, take the rest"—and manlike, who never know how to stop at enough, he was for giving me more; but satisfied with my appearance I refused them, going down sore at heart, but full of spite and vengeance. So lowering to the mind is passion, that I, who in

Fernie would have despised such manifestations, believed myself in the right to act so as I then did.

Only covering my neck and arms with a shield of the finest lace, held—as a cobweb is held by dewdrops—with the diamonds I had already worn, I believed a bad chest would result from this exposure, but recked no more of it than the portraits in the gallery.

"Ay," thought I, entering with Sir Burleigh to where our guests were assembled, "there is Samson, not only not blind, but all eyes—a very Argus—forgetting renunciation, conscience, and the rest; but I will not forget that he forged those weapons of attack, and that to wound me. Let him see through my present design as he may, it will hurt him no less."

And leaving him to Sir Burleigh, I let Lovat and Kilmarnock amuse me, which they did, each in his happiest style. Kilmarnock was much interested in the story of Dick, and my having for so long been Janet's secretary, and asked me why was I so wicked, inventing that history of the Hun.

"Tell it me," said Lovat. "Why should Sergius be more favoured?"

"Has not, then, Milord Clifford amused you?" I asked, "or is card-playing too serious a business for talking with him?"

"What it is with him," said Lovat, "I know not. With me 'tis serious enough. I have lost twenty guineas since this morning, and that to a poor fellow without a bawbee scarcely, is crying matter; but he is pleased enough, and we owe him some amends for wounding him on his own hearth-sanctuary, Lady Clifford. We may rank now with à Becket's assailants."

"Especially if he turns saint," said Kilmarnock, "in which case I am very willing to do penance at his shrine."

"Sergius believes in saints," said Lovat, with an oblique glance at his master, whose face was white as marble, in his effort to keep out of its expression the anger I knew he felt at his exclusion from our coterie. "They are numerous in the north, but, coming southward, practice their austerities less; some forgetting them entirely."

"As Lovat," said Kilmarnock.

"Come," said Lovat, "is not visiting the sick, and cheering the mourner, most saint-like? Milord Verney will speak to that for me, I'm sure."

"I challenge you to whist, milady," whispered Sergius apart, whilst Lovat was speaking to Stuart.

"And I," said Lovat, who appeared to have

heard. "We can do with a dummy, which," he added in a low tone, "will give our master a chance at that quiet chess he so affects, with Sir Burleigh."

I thought these two would choke over this simple proposition on their master's behalf. Sergius grew purple in the face, Lovat yet more wrinkled, which led me to think that suppressed laughter or emotion wrinkled the skin more than age.

So after dinner we announced our party as being formed—nor would admit any more—I being Kilmarnock's partner, Lovat obligingly playing dummy; Sir Burleigh going off to visit Verney; Stuart to a lonely walk on the terrace, whither none now followed him, and where, amidst the damp mists and dull gloom of the ghostly park, closing all darkly in, he could ruminate over and practise to renounce me.

After a rubber, Lovat went out to join his master, and, as I supposed, report progress with Verney. We heard their steps below on the gravel as they walked up and down, and presently, in a raised tone, caught Stuart's voice.

"I have no friends," said he passionately, "leave me to myself"—a soothing murmur from Lovat, to which he rejoined, "Death were better than so degraded an existence, living on the

sufferance of my servants, whose only aim is to lower and dishonour me."

"As how?" muttered Kilmarnock between his teeth, as he arranged his cards, "our chances are equal."

"Are they?" I asked, thinking he referred to the cards—then wondering what possessed his mind to say so, since he had not seen mine, "That is but a guess, Sergius," I say, laughing.

"True," said he, looking up with a great gravity in his eyes, "but a guess, and an intense hope which consumes me."

"If, sir, you allow gaming so great a hold on your mind that merely winning from me contents you, what must a real strife mean to you?"

"Death, most likely," said he moodily. "Since every puny sufferer calls on him, why not I, whose pain is real and ever present."

This was getting beyond cards, for his eyes said far more than his words.

I did not answer, feeling neither inclined to rebuke, nor far less allow, such feeling as his looks expressed to gain on his mind.

"Sergius," said I cheerfully, "when you return to France you will smile to remember my poor attempt at *grande dame*, amongst the beauties of the French Court, of whom Lovat speaks."

"I have heard," said he, "of pre-Adamites, a race of men without souls—with such I should class myself, could I smile at your beauty, simplicity, and devotion to one unworthy a glance or thought of yours. Ay," said he, bitterly, "I mean that man without, who thinks no shame to complain of me to Lovat when he is angry."

"Stop!" said I, laying my hand on his arm. "If I now listen you will yourself after condemn me."

"I will stop since you bid me," he rejoined sullenly, "but I would give up earth and heaven too for the happiness he prizes so lightly."

"He has little enough happiness," I say bitterly. "Why are you so hard to him? He is not complaining of you to Lovat, but of me, and when he is unhappy I am miserable."

"That is it," said Sergius. "If you were happy one could cry content; but to see a broken reed the support of one we love, is to feel the general insufficiency of reeds, and their hollowness, with too great bitterness for patience."

"Put up the cards," I said, "we are both lost in metaphor. Perhaps, after all, Pan's is the most common lot—to follow after a maiden and clasp a reed."

"There are some reeds," said Sergius, "whom

to clasp were to dream oneself back at once to the golden age, and to wish to clasp for ever."

"In such contingencies," I laughed, "the feelings of the reed seem to have but little weight. You image a flight and an attempt at escape ; but in all simplicity, and apparent devotion, refuse credence to the reality of the reed's wish to be rid of a pursuer. Suppose, therefore, it should refuse to believe in the generosity of a passion which slighted its wishes?"

"In real passion," he said, "generosity, as you would define it, finds no place. To say to a man in love, 'Stand aside, that your rival may win the race,' is to say to a general, 'Suffer yourself to be defeated.' Generosity in such a case were suicidal, and the man who would practise it, mad."

"The Moslems," said I, "believe that madness is from heaven—how would that explain your theory? If from heaven, therefore nobler than earthly passion."

"If!" said he. "But I am no Moslem. I wish," he added bitterly, "I dared affirm the same of others whose Islamism is the poison in the chalice of their pretended love. They love universally."

"We are on a topic," said I, "that can never

be equally discussed, far less settled, on any known grounds. Even the *trouvères* and troubadours with their 'Courts of Love' seldom agreed. Let us, then, take warning."

"Warning," said he gloomily, "to a ship amidst breakers comes too late. It is doomed a wreck."

"You are straying again," quoth I, "into metaphor. Let me see by your hand how large a line is given to imagination in you." And, taking his hand, partly to console him—who valued the most trifling favour—I traced out its many lines with my finger, giving them invented names, which amused him mightily, and took him off from serious musings on his supposed hard lot.

We were engaged on this absurdity when Stuart and Lovat entered, and when I would have withdrawn my hand Kilmarnock held it firmly, desiring to know whence I had my knowledge of palmisty, and a hundred other questions, which Stuart appeared to disdain noticing. Lovat, however, asked Kilmarnock some question, which necessitated his leaving his hold of my hand to turn and reply to, and Sir Burleigh coming in with a message to me from Verney, I was released from a position rendered odious to me from a conviction of my own folly—

the angry, sorrowful, and accusing glance of Stuart following to keep me company as I went to milord's room. I found him wide awake, feverish, and excited; and felt that we had done wrong in trusting wholly to Craig's skill, which, great as it might be in simple cases, could not be expected to cope with the complications rendered inevitable by Verney's indifferent health and irritable temperament.

"Now, Tigra," said I, smoothing his hair, which he appeared to like, "if I say something which may vex you, don't be vexed, but——"

"Great is the company of the preachers," he interposed. "Do I want soothing like a sick woman? Say what you like. It is sure to be d——d folly, more likely to amuse than vex me. Is it about my wife?"

"No," I said, "but if you would like Fernie to come——"

"You ask—knowing her," he rejoined, "if I want to be harassed to death. What is it, then?"

"That you make no progress, milord, and a surgeon would be better for your hurts than than Craig, willing as he is to do his best, and useful as he has been."

"I have thought so, too," he allowed, "but how is one to be got in this wild place—I mean

a London surgeon, for a Letchford leech would only undo the bandages and set the wounds off bleeding. I must have a man of skill and experience. I tell you, Helen, that I feel my life depends on it, and thank you therefore for your speaking. Sir Burleigh is naturally unwilling to bring a stranger here, but I know a Dr. Holland, reckoned a Jacobite, yet suffered everywhere for his skill. Lovat knows him, too. He is a gambler, 'tis true, for that is where I met with him—I mean at a hell. Yet, as I owe him nothing, that makes no difference to me."

"It may to him," I suggested. "He may not like losing his practice—at cards."

"That he need not," said Verney, with languid interest. "He might even double his fees. For 'tis not to be expected I am a match for a man with an unhurt body. Sometimes the twinges of pain put me off good play."

"Settled then," I said. "I will get Sir Burleigh to ask Lovat to write to this man, who will, I know, refuse, if he be not safe to have here. I will come in again presently. Try to sleep."

"I wish I could," he moaned, as I left the room.

Accomplishing my mediation, and Lovat being willing to vouch for this expected new inmate, a

messenger with a letter was sent off, who, by hard riding, would meet the London coach. And Verney, easier in his mind, became more cheerful, and asked me to sit up with him. "Diamonds, lace, and all," he stipulated. "I don't sleep much, and can lie and watch you, and think of all the cursed wiles you have been engaged in all your life, and how so much craft grew in a humble farm homestead."

"Thought is free," I laughed, "but craft is a kind of contagion I caught from your neighbourhood, Verney. See how long I have known you, coming and going, and how little of interest I had to study, and then you will cease to wonder at the influence of a wicked citizen of the world over a guileless poor girl at a farm."

"I might retort," he said, "a poor simple man, with little to do, falls into company of a witch, who, for reasons of her own, lives at a farm."

"Let us miscall the rest," I said, "and be respectful to ourselves, or the night will not pass without a quarrel—not on my part, but you are no Stoic, Verney, and love your own way. I will tell you stories out of history." And as he acquiesced, so long as I held his hand, I told him an invented tale, which I titled "The Golden House of Nero," bringing in so many slaves,

gladiators, Greeks, and lovely ladies—each with a branch history—that when at length I concluded it, leaving Nero in his dishonoured tomb, with the flowers an unknown hand had placed on it, Verney, who had read very little but plays, was lost in astonishment at the extent and variety of my historical and ethnological knowledge, and declared himself willing to come to school to me.

"It is not all strictly accurate," I ventured to affirm when he was in full tide of eulogy.

"Yes it is," he insisted. "I can see him, just as he looked—with that soft cleft in his chin, with his dark blue eyes and violet crown. I can see him carrying the vine-dresser's faggot home for him through the streets of Rome; and, Helen, it must have been a woman put those flowers on his grave—a woman like you," he went on wistfully. "I can imagine you forgiving even me, though all my life I have but plagued you."

In the midst of this contest of compliments, very unusual for either of us, Sir Burleigh came in to bid me go to bed, for he would sit up.

"I am not tired," I protested. "I am teaching Verney history, and he likes it."

"Pretty history," said Sir Burleigh, with good-humoured contempt. "Whose history?"

"A history of Nero, sir!"

"Nero," said he, "was a blackguard!"

"I left out all the worst parts," I hastened to add.

"Then," said Verney, "I will never believe you again, for he was the worst fellow that ever lived—and how could he have been worse I own is a puzzle."

"There is one thing certain," said Sir Burleigh, "that Nero will be none the less black now for his historian."

"Thank you!" said I. "The poor historians relate to order—and Verney likes black swans." With which I wished them good-night, and went off, meeting at a turn of the corridor Stuart and Lovat. Stuart I looked at in amaze—he had been drinking too much wine, and was not master of himself; his face was deeply flushed, his eyes bright and unsteady, his hands shaking. Lovat held him tightly by the arm, and I passed on to my room grieved and astonished.

"I will go on from bad to worse," Stuart declared to me the next day, as in the character of an invalid he was allowed to rest in the yellow room, whilst the others worked in the study. I stood by the fire knitting, and thinking woefully of this new fault.

"I wish it had been poison, for Kilmarnock took some too."

"Don't talk to me," I said sighing. "Neither will further self-indulgence profit you. If you put on your plaid and went for a long walk——"

"As a Helot," said he savagely, "for Kilmarnock to see and preach of to you?"

"I am my own preacher, sir. Sergius could add nothing to my pain to see you behave so unworthily."

"Nor nothing to my pain," he said mockingly, "for I have a headache and heartache that, together, are more than one poor wretch can stand against."

"Sir," said Kilmarnock, entering with a letter, "will you give your assent to this or no?"

He took the paper with a firm hand and examined it, biting his lip the while to keep down all expression of pain from the severe headache from which he suffered, and which seemed to render thought intolerable to him. Yet he read it through. "It has my assent, sir." He returned it coldly to Kilmarnock, who bowed and withdrew.

"Would he but keep to business," he said, "Kilmarnock would be invaluable."

"To your business," I suggested, "or his own?"

"They are identical," he said, closing his eyes.

"Then why not his pleasures, his amusements?" I asked indignantly, the sight of Sergius toiling without thanks making me angry.

"That there is nothing against, but your pleasure," said he. Then, as I disdained all further reply to him, he opened his eyes to see if I was still there.

"Forgive me!" said he humbly, "if I think and speak like a ruffian under the influence of this cursed wine. At least think who drove me to it, and what my misery must have been that suffered me so to degrade myself. You are an unforgiving devil," he muttered moaning, as he threw his head back on the cushion. "Last night's torture counts with you for nothing."

"I am sorry the Clifford port should treat a guest so badly," said Sir Burleigh, coming in cheerfully. "Are you no better, sir?"

"Very little, Sir Burleigh—an incessant headache?"

"Poor lad!" said Sir Burleigh pityingly. "I will get you a wet towel," and hastening upstairs he returned with a cloth wrung out in cold water—and Craig coming in with a cup of coffee, they between them bestowed as much attention on him as though he had been some student exhausted with toil and study. Nay, more,

for many a poor student would have been thankful for the least of the kindly officious services rendered to this unworthy lingerer at the wine.

I went out in anger and disgust, not to countenance by my presence the taking off an iota of his deserved penance, being willing to add to it, if only a means presented itself to my mind.

"Pshaw!" said Sir Burleigh, as I expressed this to him on his coming out. "How should you know what a devil is in that beeswing bin? He is half mad with pain, and no man I know ever takes less as a rule—do him justice."

"Lovat says something annoyed and harassed him last night. I don't pretend to know what, but if you had any hand in it, Sir," said I indignantly.

"Now listen!" he said sternly. "That you, Sergius, and Lovat, were caballed against him last night I will myself swear. Ay, and kept it up too with some spirit, for I was noting it and laughing. But it is beyond a joke that he should be made miserable—and, remember, he is but a Hielander. If 'twas his fault, forgive him. Sergius is estranged—he is feeling bitterly at having sworded Verney in his own house. I own I have myself been a bit harsh to him about it. Yet he has now but Lovat and me in

the whole d——d place who are less than enemies to him."

"I will forgive him," said I, coldly—"at a distance."

"By —!" said Sir Burleigh, "you are obstinate and immovable as an oak. It is well you have not a hard drinker, my dear, for a husband, for gout and your displeasure would soon enough kill him."

"I could not be displeased with you, ever," I rejoined, putting both my hands on his broad shoulders, and lifting my face for a kiss. "I don't know how I lived without you, sir."

"Nor I you," he responded, warmly embracing me—adding, "And yet you might have drifted away with that red-headed soldier."

"Which?" I asked, puzzled—"Alexis, or Blount?"

The deep laugh with which he received and answered this question amused me too, though in asking it I had no other than a trifling curiosity.

Being again asked to "forgive" Stuart, on account of his drowning his grief at our cabal in wine, I reluctantly agreed, promising that by the evening dinner we would again form a united party. I left Sir Burleigh happy and returned to the penancer.

"Well!" said I softly, approaching the couch where the long outstretched figure lay, seeming still as though dead. He did not reply, but stretched out his hand and clasped mine, his eyes remaining closed. I put my hand on his head, it was of a burning heat; he was silent, and seemed exhausted.

"I have forgiven you," I said, putting my face down beside his. He answered by a pressure of the hand.

Having fetched some rose-water, I bathed his forehead, preaching to him meanwhile in murmured accents of love and pity, which he seemed to like. Not so when Sergius came stiffly in, evidently sent by Sir Burleigh, intent on peace-making.

At the first tone of his voice I withdrew, and a dark angry flush mounted to Stuart's brow, as he rose, holding himself as stiffly as the other.

"Sir Burleigh reported you as ill, sir," said Kilmarnock. "I trust it is nothing serious?"

"Nothing worse than headache," he replied; "but I thank Sir Burleigh for sending you, milord—and you for coming," he added coldly, "though I know such a friendly act is a present pleasure to you."

"You are right, sir," said Kilmarnock, as

bitterly as he, and at a sign from the other he withdrew with a bow of ceremony.

"What officious meddling fiend sent him in?" he said, stretching himself again on the couch, "Come and finish what you were saying, Helen."

"It was only," said I, "that you had acted abominably, and had better not do so again."

"That was the sense, yes," said he, "but I want the sound close to my ear."

"No," said I, "not Amurath,—an Amurath commands—but Harry, Harry! you have offended Sergius, and I am going."

"That you shall not," said he springing up. "That man's moods are nothing to you, yet you watch them, and ward off pin-pricks from him; you are tender of his feelings as if he were a girl, and he is steel to those of others."

"Methinks," I say, "that headache is nursed enough. Is it not better yet?"

"A little," he had to own, yet, returning to his sofa, I, for peace' sake, had to resume my post at its head and the interrupted lecture, which soon passed from murmured reproof to a complete amnesty and making-up.

So well did this cure him that he was able to come in to luncheon, and even to eat some *salmis* of pheasant, though only a little. Lovat talked incessantly. Kilmarnock was sad and grave.

What little Stuart said was addressed to Sir Burleigh, but he kept a strict, unceasing watch on me, and, not wishing—by vexing him—to bring back his headache, I avoided Sergius' eye, lest his patience and merit should lead my pity of him to express itself.

Thus is it ever in life that the prodigal gets the better of the true, grave, honourable, stedfast elder brother. Such an appeal is in weakness. So flattering to our sovereign pride is it to be appealed to, that we put aside Justice as too harsh, and, finding out Mercy in her soft plumes, fan our culprits with them.

Two days, which passed quietly enough, had gone; on the third morning Doctor Holland came—a keen-eyed, silent man, whom, in despite of his being a Jacobite, none of us liked. He worked a marvellous change for the better in Verney; was servile to Stuart, obsequious to Sir Burleigh, and obliging to the last degree to all. But Lovat's wrinkles expressed dislike of him. Nevertheless, his medical duties done, he was induced to accept a mission to Scotland in the Jacobite interest.

"That," said Lovat, when he was gone, "though it pay him now, puts the rope round his neck if he attempts anything against us, for our agents there will lead him into overt acts

enough to frighten all Hanover should they be evidenced against him. It is thus we make our waverers safe. 'Money shalt thou have and present pay, I'll swear by Nym, and Nym shall swear by me!'"

Then he went off, smiling sardonically to himself, while the good doctor, puffed with political vanity, was making a "politic ass" of himself at Lovat's bidding.

Verney could rise now, and joined us sometimes, but was very shy of Stuart (who was ice to him), and milord never lingered long, nor spoke loud in his company—a strange change in overbearing Verney Clifford. Kilmarnock hated him, but was coldly civil. Lovat, cordial and friendly, quite won him, in the freezing atmosphere of the rest; he showed like a hot-spring in Lapland, or a well in the desert—or, which he was—a remorseless old political ogre, grinding Verney's innocent bones to make Jacobite bread.

So the grey autumn days went on—to me, happy as summer, sweet as spring. No chronicle could keep pace with the varying moods in which Stuart, to try his power (which was absolute), or test my love, indulged; yet we were most blissfully content to bicker and make it up (like two fools), and could do so unhindered—for now there was a quartette for cards, we had chess and the

yellow room to ourselves, of which we never tired.

Precarious and uncertain as affairs at their best were, we were happy. Only one fear possessed me, that soon they must go. I saw that even Lovat's acquiescence to his master's will began to lose a little of its serene urbanity, and one day Stuart came in much out of temper, declaring he had such a sort of greybeard loons always counselling him that a crown was too high a price to pay—that they expected him to be a lay figure, on which to drape and adjust their policy, without a wish or will of his own.

Seeing him so ruffled, I forbore to ask of his present grievance, deeming it some political difference they could best settle themselves.

"What should you think," said he presently, ceasing his agitated and angry walk up and down the room, and sitting beside me, "to my being told pat, that I continually cast obstacles in the way of my own success; that I alienated allies, tired the most tender patience of my friends, and delayed progress, for reasons selfish and trifling?"

"Who told you?" said I trembling, beginning now to believe he had been chid on my account.

"Lovat," said he, "or he at least was recipient of this letter. Do him justice, he will not ever willingly disquiet me. I know to whom

I am indebted for this precious mandate,—Sergius."

"Do not blame him without cause," said I. "May I read this?" Taking it I read—

"My dear Son,

"The general progress of events here is satisfactory enough, of the particulars of which you have from time to time been kept duly advised—as we on this side, of the noble and strenuous efforts made by you and your counsellors on that side. This is enclosed open in a letter to Lovat, who has your confidence, and will, I am sure, suppress it if in any particular to which it refers I have been misinformed, or over-exaggerated accounts sent me of your conduct. To speak plainly, adherents are not to be risked for any fancy or caprice. A pretty woman will not greatly aid our cause either in field or cabinet, otherwise this would not need to be writ. And then again, though a man may not greatly value his possessions, yet but few mislike to have them taken away either by force or fraud—and to us justice is, just now, when battling for our rights, to be respected even to the last grain of iron in her scales. Beauty is, as even Socrates allowed, a soft, smooth, all-permeating temptation; but then there are beauties here,

enough and to spare, unattached, and who would stand in the way of no adherent's loyalty. Again, I repeat, we must risk no featherweight of English influence or English friendship. I should, I own, have thought Sergius, as a man of the world, would have counselled you from this blunder. As he has apparently not thought it his business to advise with you in this respect, I must hope and conclude it has been much overstated to me, being one of those inflammable subjects which frail human nature is in its very substance given to exaggerate. Henry thinks with me that it is some thoughtless *liaison*, to be dropped as easily as 'twas begun; but remember you are not now in France. Take my earnest advice—lift your head from the lap of this Delilah. You have resolution enough for this, and you was not sent to England flower-gathering, or to gain promotion as a *trouvère*. We are all well here. Henry sends kind greetings—the same most warmly from, dear son Charles,

"YOUR FATHER."

"It is very good advice," I say, the thick paper trembling in my hand. "I have been selfish, but am not the wicked wretch set forth here, who have ensnared you for mere wantonness. I cannot wish that I had let you die—yet

why, your life saved, did you make me an object of public scorn, of letters such as this, of a branding-iron of infamy. Take back your love, bestow it on a French dame, I will none of it. Sergius is the only friend I have, for the rest, they are busy mockers."

"Sweet!" said he, "why disquiet ourselves about a parental epistle? It is his duty to write it. I'll write the very same to my son, and keep this for a copy, for I hate composing letters. 'Tis but altering the Charles at the end to Rohan, and leaving out a phrase or two about adherents for then will all be settled—and there it is:—

"My dear Son,

"Your mother and I have heard with much disquiet that you have inherited a taste for beauty, and a talent for intrigue. Be moderate—these high-class beauties are generally fierce and intractable, much given to making their lovers miserable. And that you may be happy is, my dear son, the prayer of your loving father,

"Charles Edward."

"There, Helen, tear it up—it is sufficiently imprinted on my mind. I am not going to do it, not a word. I will write and say, of course, that there is no truth in it at all; that day and night I am zealously working for the cause, and

take it to be a proof of active malevolence of some enemy; that Sergius (as he doth) gives me good counsel on every subject of moment; that our patron saint is Augustine; in short, a dutiful letter, the very moral of which I, in my turn, shall expect to receive, and shall immediately endorse—'Received, but not believed.'"

"I hope sir, that your son will tell you the truth."

"I hope he will not—why should he? Truth is too precious to be spent between father and son without necessity. Obedience is another thing. He tells me to lift my head from your lap—I must first put it there. Delilah, what sweet, soft hands you have, the trying to lift my head is like two roses patting it—it is delicious! *Hic jacet filius obedientissimus.*"

Sad and sorrowful, I was re-reading the letter, when he gently took it from me, and tore it across once or twice, throwing the pieces into the fire.

"We shall have many such stings," said he; "but I do not count them irremediable, nor must you let them weigh on you unduly, but patiently abide them for my sake, as I will gladly for yours, sweetest! We cannot, as two country lovers might, live to ourselves; eyes there will always be to watch, tongues to report, tales

to be writ. Yet what of all this need try our philosophy of love, so much the more shall I love you and come to you for rest, so much the more will you cling to me for comfort. No storms can divide us, you know it is true. Many waters cannot quench love—such love as mine I cannot realize how I could live without you. Yet, as a man and woman of the world, we cannot expect always this daisied peace, this unhindered, unenvied bliss. That is why I myself showed you this letter, to warn you not to be disquiet on account of such small frets, nor attach undue importance to them. Corydon and Phyllis, with but the dairy and the plough to think of, might be thunderstruck if their love provoked comment, or invited censure. You and I must put up with it, as part of our higher station and greater importance. Sweet, kiss me!"

"Come, kiss me sweet and twenty!"

"You twenty, Helen, it is incredible! Quite an old woman—just out of her teens. No, I shall not tell you my age—ask Kilmarnock, he will gladly, and add on a little."

"I do not think so, Sergius is inflexibly just."

"You have too good an opinion of him; let him moralize as he may, he is no anchorite, and, for I know not what reason, is specially taken

with you, Helen. He, a statesman, in love! I shall watch you both, so be warned."

"And I you," I rejoined, "so be warned, should we ever be in ladies' company together."

"That you may, sweet and twenty, if you find my allegiance to you swerve by a hair's breadth to any woman in the world. Only—you must be fair, Helen—of course that must not prohibit courtesy to them."

"Pshaw!" said I, secure of my power over him. "There will then be others to divide with me the censure of such letters as that whose ashes are on the hearth, and other men to relieve milord Kilmarnock of your unfounded suspicions. I tell you he is a philosopher."

"A pretty philosopher!—he is always at gaze when you are by, and I won't have it."

"Then, sir, blindfold him. I tell you he only looks at me when he speaks, and can do no less. He has very fine eyes, like those of a picture!"

"Have you told him so?"

"Not quite in those words. I told him he resembled a portrait by Titian!"

"Helen, you are mad!"

"I always was—witness this silly scene. Get your head off my lap!"

"Stop pulling my hair!—I want to think. I wonder will your country training endure to see

me at Court, as kind and courteous as there I must be to women?"

"No," said I, "it will not. So we will leave that chapter out of my experience. I can be happy apart from pageantry, for which I have no taste."

"But," said he, "when the rising in arms takes place, as it shortly must, you will not, surely, desert me for self-pity?"

"No," I replied, "but my resolve is fixed to be no more than an onlooker at any grand doings —no sharer."

"That will be," said he, "as Sir Burleigh pleases, and at his installation as Baron you cannot be absent."

"No," I returned, feeling an intense misery steal into my mind at mention of Sir Burleigh, "yet, but for its being your cause, I could wish him out of it altogether and safe anchored here. For myself," I went on, "whether such a weed as I floats out into the ocean or is rooted ashore, it matters nothing; but I own I love the stately oaks on the Manor, and I should love to think of him as being amongst them to the end, happy and peaceful."

"Dear," said he, "if you image Sir Burleigh as calmly settling down on the lees of life, you have mistaken your man. He is proud, keen,

and ambitious as Lovat or Kilmarnock; and St. Lawrence, on his gridiron, were to be more envied than Sir Burleigh, should destiny keep him inactive here when right rule was being contested or settled elsewhere. So dismiss that feeling from your mind. Were he bound here with ever so new ropes, the first call to arms in our cause would snap them like threads—ay, even were you the one to try and bind him. How, were it not so, would he persevere as he has for years? And once we were established, our gratitude to him would root him far more firmly than could he now hope ever to be rooted under Hanover. For, in any event—in the very worst eventuality—do not dream that you could turn his allegiance from us—his is not such a pliant nature. Whatever may befall, as the Cliffords rose with us, so would they choose, nay, insist, on sharing our fate."

"Except one," said I.

"And that one I will myself guard from desertion," he laughed, "let what other prisoners may escape, allies waver, or adherents fall off. That one is my prisoner, of whom I will make no surrender, nor for whom take no ransom. The love of my life—the girl whose name is stamped upon my heart. My darling, you have had much to forgive, but believe me—

with many faults—not oblivious that you are my good angel, my love, my life, and my soul, without whose love my life might, for all my care, end now."

Nor were these sweet words all—for we forgot the patient waiting of the chess king and queen, the oblique knights eyeing their moves from white to black, the little straightforward pawns and stately bishops; forgot the chequered board, the near card-players, the rustling oaks outside, whispering through all the still night of their youthful glory; forgot all past pain and present, ever-present fear of parting; forgot, as only love forgets, that it has wings—when folded it settles in sweet calm that seems destined to last for ever. So much pain had we gone through, so many partings and unhappy little estrangements that the present hour had to make amends for. There is, after all, a little true happiness left in the world, and of that we stored up for the near future, when being parted each should remember the tones, the sighs, the kisses, we might for so long be debarred from. The golden day so quickly passing wrapped us in its sweetest dreams, which, awake to what we might, memory would ever hold harvested as honey-sweet and real.

The history of men's lives may be divided

into events brought about by Fate on the current into which they are flung, and those deliberately chosen by an act of conscious volition. Thus I had been called on for decisions which were almost foregone conclusions; for action where inaction was impossible; for speech, where to keep silence were madness. Now came a tangle in which straight-going silence, speech, action, or inaction were equally difficult, and equally dangerous. I allude to Kilmarnock, who, proud and self-contained as he was, had been unable to suppress all outward manifestion of a warm regard for me—an angry jealousy of Stuart, quite out of the lines of his professed friendship for both. This bitterness of feeling, long patent to me, broke into words as we walked in the park. I cannot say what begun it, for we had been speaking but little, and that of commonplace, as the day or the hour. Probably 'twas some allusion to Stuart.

"He is indeed a happy man," said he, "and to be envied, who without desert—almost without care for it—obtains the most precious gift the world can bestow—Love!"

"Does not everyone obtain it in part, milord? You have the love of wife, of children, the happiness of knowing yourself all in all to them."

"Helen," said he, "you do not know how men of our world are married—young, for prudence sake—to a beauty, that the eye may be pleased and sated; to a woman of good connections, that friends may be contented and foes have no wherewithal to cavil. Yet, beauty and prudence, family and fortune, are but as husks to the heart of man. A man loves but once in his life, and that against all rule, all forecasting. The heart is a prodigal, returning ever to its first love—praying ever the anguished, uncontrollable prayer, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants—even me, wretched and unworthy as I may seem.'"

He fixed his eyes on mine, which, half in affright at this sudden turn the talk had taken, this sudden outbreak of but surmised passion, were raised to his.

"Sir," said I lightly—though I own a scorching blush rose to my face at this entreating glance—"we are all exiled from some supposed bliss, which travelled to and reached, might prove worthless. We are all 'joined to a citizen of this country,' nor cannot expect other than husks on earth."

Conscious of the smallness and ecclesiasticism of this rebuke, I blushed yet more; nor dared raise my eyes again lest I should see fulfilled

the dawn of the bitter smile that rose to his lips.

"Blessed are those that expect nothing," said he, "who, being fed all their lives on negations, dare go to none for sympathy—who ask humbly for bread and get a stone."

"Surely not," said I, with something of that petulance of tone no woman will use to a man wholly indifferent to her. "That is an unkind thing to say of the sincerity of my friendship. Of its uselessness it may be true enough. Am I to blame that your life has been starved on negations? Perhaps, did you but know, it may be better than life's bread, which is often bitter enough."

"Yet is what we all crave," said he. "A mirage may be better than a desert spring, in appearance—yet how one longs, being thirsty, for the water, rejecting the grandeur. How the heart will answer, being questioned of its longings, its restlessness, 'From going to and fro on the earth, and wandering up and down upon it, I come at last, at last to my home, my haven, where I would be for ever."

"That," said I (though misdoubting it), "will be your glad and happy experience when the cause, triumphing, shall release you to those you love."

"I love you," said his eyes—while his tongue, no less daring, professed a friendship so ardent that 'twas love—a devotion, told with the broken incoherence of passion.

"Sergius," said I pityingly, "this is terrible. Tell me I am not to answer for it—for indeed I meant no wrong to you by my friendship. Acquit me of the mean ambition—the baseness—of betraying you into this feeling, which is I hope but temporary. Tell me 'tis but 'a statesman's love,' which the next political move will efface, as the waves a writing on sand."

"That is it," said he, in despairing tones. "A statesman's love—the idle fancy of an idle day—when policy is at rest and leisure must be amused. Think so, if you will. But you cannot. My God, that I had never seen you! or seen you happy from the first. I did not rush into this. It has stolen on me—slowly, subtly. It is part of my life. Nor would I, if I could, banish it. 'Tis as the sunshine steals into a grey dungeon, awaking and showing to the prisoner within what might have been was he free. 'Tis as a rose reaching to prison bars makes faint the heart weary for beauty, for fragrance, for love for life, which have been shut from him for many drear days.

"To you it is a mere statesman's love, who

have the love, as he calls it, of his prince—were I to prove it as fixed and deep as ocean—while any wind of circumstance, or sunshine of pleasure could suffice to evaporate into mist the fancy for you which just now holds possesion of his mind—for has he not proved himself heartless?—you would still believe his lightest word against the truth of a life. I am indeed miserable. It is merciful of you to listen patiently. Were you not so far above your sex in talent as in beauty, I should not be now the unhappy wretch you have caused me to become. Had he but valued you at a thousandth part of your desert, I would have suffered to die ere I spoke."

So he went on, lamenting his hard fate in bitter terms, nor would not listen when I urged that I had endeavoured to stop the growth of any such feeling in him by a kind friendship.

Such kindness he unjustly accused as the fanning wings of a vampire, soothing whilst it fattened on his heart's blood, and other such far-fetched excuses for his wild and angry accusations against me. "Only the love of a statesman" was his moan, "to offer to a woman whose ruling passion is ambition, and who sees higher possibilities not of love, but of life, in the paltry preference of the minute, of a prince."

"Stop!" said I at length, wearied out with these causeless reproaches (which were, besides, immoral). "Sergius, I have listened to you patiently for friendship's sake. Now, choose either that or nothing; for grieved at this made fancy of yours as I am, I cannot accuse myself of fostering it, and it will die out as causeless as it came, if you do not dwell on it."

"Die out!" said he fiercely. "Ay, when my heart ceases to beat, when all my pulses are cold in death. Then if you give me a thought, say 'Sergius is happy, he has forgotten me'—for no mockery in hell would be so bitter to me as is the mockery of his so-called love to you, and I must stand by silent and see it."

"You are not specially silent," I said, endeavouring to give a lighter tone to his wild talk, "nor I specially wise in listening; but I cannot, as you know, bear to see you unhappy, and if it content you, I love you as a brother."

With a mutter and a moan of rejection of this peace-offering, he walked on. We were in the park, walking around the brink of the black, sombre lake—the lapping of its small wavelets came to our feet. The still sombreness of late October was all around us; fitful gleams of pale sunshine came at intervals; for the rest, 'twas a dreary grey day, suiting well with the dark discontent into

which Kilmarnock had suffered himself to drift. or be driven by his unfounded anger with Stuart, whose love he had rated at his own valuation, nor would not allow any to dispute the accuracy of his weight and measurement, and grieved himself that, as he said, it fell short of my merits —which, true or false, should no whit have concerned him, since I was satisfied.

"Sergius," said I, overtaking him. "Why," I continued, shocked to see tears in his eyes, "you are not so foolish, surely?"

"Say rather," he said fiercely, "You are no crocodile, luring on its prey by feigned emotions, as Stuart."

"Then," said I, "you are no crocodile; see, I will say what you bid me."

"Then say you love me," he gasped, rather than spoke. "Say you love me—whether it be true or false, say it. I can then think that but for Stuart you would love me and be happier. I will not," he went on, "think it real, yet in madness they give alleviations by soft words, and I am mad with pain and misery. Surely," he continued bitterly, "you do not so distrust my sanity as to doubt that I should overvalue it. Say you love me, Helen—once—once—I can then dream of it, and be happy."

I looked at the black gloomy water at our

feet, at the drearness of the wintry prospect around, and then at the intense passion in Kilmarnock's face, and shivered. I did not misdoubt him; he meant this, as he had meant the rest, in good faith. Yet, should a madman, I reflected, invite one to throw a lit fuse on gunpowder, would it not be greater madness to comply, a more cruel unkindness, than to refuse? Still I was sorry for Sergius—I knew, better than any could have told me, that he was in the wrong, either to cherish or express such thoughts—yet who could be so heartless not to pity him, seeing them sincere, and that he was suffering?

"Of what use," said I firmly, at length, "to be a real vampire. Sergius, I do, indeed, love you—" I was about to add, "as a brother," when a step startled us both. It was Lovat, who seemed to be gazing at a distant speck on the lake.

"You are, doubtless," he said cheerfully, joining us, "wondering, as I am, what that black speck on the lake can be. I think it is a moor-hen."

"Moor-hens," said I, "do not swim."

"Pardon me," said Lovat, "it is, I think, according to the latitude in which they find themselves. They have that great quality—adaptability."

"It is, indeed," said I, "a great quality, and, under our present puzzle, would be a delightful development of it if you, milord, or Sergius, would be boyish enough to throw a stone and startle it into moving."

"I will," volunteered Kilmarnock, his before downcast face bright and happy, and we all set to work to discover stones, which were scarce, Lovat and Sergius aiming at the speck; it resolved itself into a small log, on which a water-rat was resting, which immediately plunged in, swimming for the opposite shore. We all walked leisurely round the lake to see it land if possible, but were too late, and so, having had a tolerable promenade for the coldness of the season, we returned indoors, Sergius looking far too elate to satisfy me of the wisdom of my words to him, though the intention was innocent. It could not escape me that his promise of not building upon them was a rope of sand, let him have meant it never so sincerely.

All that evening I felt unhappy. It is true the letter of our late distance was kept, but I imagined Lovat was watching both Kilmarnock and myself, perhaps only the twinge of an uneasy conscience, a mind ill at ease, self-convicted of incredible folly—of, for mere pity's sake,

leading Sergius into further wild regions of thought and higher flights of hope.

So much did this uneasiness possess me that I could settle to nothing, and did the perhaps most foolish thing to be done in the like circumstances, sought an explanation with Kilmarnock, who, I felt resentfully, seemed well content now to be told that I meant less than nothing by my verbal concession to his madness of pleading.

"I know you meant nothing," he admitted, yet do not rescind it—it is but taking the corroding-iron of your utter indifference to me from my soul, but an opiate to a poor wretch in torment—as such only I look on it." Yet, said his eyes, more honest than his words, yet I count it a victory and sweet, let it be never so grudgingly given, or so retracted.

The explanation appeared, for some inexplicable reason, still further to increase his contentment, until, in irritation at my own unwisdom, I had a mind never to speak to him as a friend again, and had to avoid Stuart, lest the burden of so silly a secret should induce me to confide it to him, and so get absolution at once. This I would have done but for Kilmarnock's sake, whom I felt 'twould be unjust to betray.

Stuart was, for him, truly forbearing; our late

amity, and harvested promises to believe each in the other against all outward evidence, gained the victory over all his natural jealousy and distrustfulness, and I felt what a sweet rest love was to a sorely harassed mind, and truly grateful to him. To Kilmarnock, however, he was cold and distant, who received this changed conduct with complete indifference, proving his mind was absorbed in other matters.

Verney was now on such excellent terms with Lovat as could not be bettered, and Sir Burleigh, delighted with his apparent conversion to Jacobitism, and indulgent to his weakness, played higher than he really cared for himself, to content him. Lovat, like a crafty courtier, kept well with all, nor did I detect by any word or sign that he had noticed the agitation of Sergius at the lake-side. It remained for Stuart to prove how well I was watched, who said, carelessly :

"Something seems to content Sergius with his stay here ; but a few days since he was for a fiery flight, almost without a farewell, and Lovat and I had ado to induce him to remember we were as near our messengers here as elsewhere. Now we are hoist with our own petard, for move him we may not. We both hinted of our prolonged stay and desired counsel to go—whether we

would have taken it is another matter—but no, here is headquarters, and to him, apparently, happiness."

"What mental infirmity is it in men," I said, "that induces them ever to grudge happiness to each other? If Burleigh Manor is Sergius' pleasure, let him stay, and do you and milord Lovat go, whenever you tire of it."

This I said to tease him, also because it is partly true that no man cares for his dearest friend's too great contentment.

"Helen," said he severely, "that levity which is part of your nature blinds you to the fact that Sergius only contents himself so well because he is wrapped up in pleasant illusions, which staying will but foster. I will at once, therefore, persuade him to go; it were better, even if nothing else induces him, to go myself, than let him play Malvolio for your amusement, for that he is bent on and you know it."

"Olivia did not know it," said I, "and I am no waiting-maid to trick an honest Scot, much less Sergius, whom I love. Nor is he the fool of such illusions as you fancy, sir."

"Of that I am the best judge," he retorted harshly, "though I but jested—and you think it fine fooling to have a statesman like Kilmarnock beside himself; but I can afford you no such

sport as putting out the eyes of my Samson, or so blinding them that he sees but one object."

"That," said I, "is your honour and interest and, trust me, if you treat him unjustly, I——"

Here I could say no more for tears, conscious that, by speaking at all, I had but riveted suspicion on him. Just then he unluckily came in, and was received with so much sullenness by his master, that, feeling incensed by the injustice of it, I begged him, so long as business allowed, or his pleasure was, to remain at the Manor, fearing lest Stuart should allege a disposition on our part to hasten his going.

He thanked me, asking what particular truant disposition he had manifested, that I should doubt his great pleasure and content in staying at the Manor. His words, though measured, seemed to have an under-current of irony, and the quick glance he darted at Stuart, who had walked away, convinced me he had noted his attempts at hastening his departure.

"Who is indignant, and I burn not?" says St. Paul.

Injustice was to me extremely repugnant, and that Sergius, who I was convinced worked with zeal and success, should be ungratefully treated, was a challenge flung at my very feet, and which I could not resist taking up, though at heart I

was convinced Kilmarnock would be both safer and happier away. He should not by my good will be forced to go, unless he pleased. I had a feeling of faithful friendship for him, which would not allow any to usurp my conscience in regard to him, or suffer him to be evil entreated of tyrants, let his madness be what it might, and that Stuart should find. So I reasoned angrily to myself, and badly for both.

When he presently withdrew, I, who was occupied with some gold thread, mending a drop-to-pieces banner, worked by a former lady of the house, went on disdainfully with my employment, nor would not so much as speak to Stuart for his ungracious speech about Sergius.

Sir Burleigh and Lovat came in, chatted for awhile, till querulously called by Verney for cards when they went out. Still I drew the gold threads slowly through the banner, silence, not at all as golden, settling heavily down on us. Mechanical work will sometimes go on the better for mental disquiet; in this case, though I laboured to think of it, the two points of the banner were of unequal length. It was Stuart who, watching, made me aware of this, and coming over he measured them, finally taking it from, and imprisoning my hands.

"Ah! Helen," said he, "see, I speak first! I

was wrong, yet must you—you, be my judge and accuser on every paltry occasion?"

"This was no paltry occasion," I replied, freeing my hands. "You were unjust and ungrateful."

"By ——!" said he, "you do not stick at epithets. Where, madam, is the injustice of sending my own servant away when it so pleases me? Would you so angrily insist on Lovat's remaining, granted I had expressed a wish for his departure?"

"Yes," said I, "had Lovat been called Malvolio or Samson, and I a Philistine executioner!"

"Forgive me, then," said he, "unconditionally, for I have no heart to prove you in the wrong, as you were," and kneeling beside me, his resistless eyes gained forgiveness; yet that he might not go altogether unpunished, I tied his hair into tufts with gold thread, making him like the hero of Riquet à la Houpe. Not discontented with this foolishness, he promised amendment on every count, vowing Sergius was a good fellow and his best friend. This praise, after his so recent anger, sounded ominous. Nor was I greatly surprised when, next day, Lovat informed me that Kilmarnock was urgently required at Leith, and would that day have to begin his

journey thither. "Nor," said he, with rather a sour smile, "is he the only one whose absence is causing discontent. You see, Lady Clifford, were our business purely a clerical one, no place could better the Manor; but there are interviews to be granted, adherents visited, the chiefs of clans waited on in their eyries in the Highlands, whom neither reward nor promotion would lure to the southward, away from their savage solitudes and misty Trossach glens. A campaign to be successful must not be all Capua."

"Of that I am sure," I replied, though with a heavy heart and involuntary sigh.

We were walking in the park, the morning being fine and dry. Lovat presently pleading business, left me, and with only Beech as companion, I went on ruminating rather sadly at this intimation that I was expected to do my part in hastening Stuart's departure. It was just, I felt, yet terribly hard—not on him, riding off to fresh fields and new pastures, with greeting hands and loving welcome everywhere; but on me, condemned every minute to miss him, to feel the blank of absence, the dulness of his loss. Yet, I thought, it is for his good, therefore I must not even passively oppose it, and with hanging head and eyes, into which tears would come, I tried to picture the Manor with-

out him. So had I walked some distance when Kilmarnock rode up, alighting to say his farewells.

"A king's messenger," said he bitterly, "must be brief, so Lovat informs me. Yet to him, and not to me, rightly belongs the business with which I am charged. It is, you will think, no time for hair-splitting, and to that I yield. Yet I could find it in my heart to split the thousandth part of a hair so I might stay."

"Yet," said I lightly, "it is a fine riding day!"

"Too fine, too dry," said he passionately. "A tempest only could image my mind or soothe it."

"Then," I returned, "ride on and meet one in the Highlands. Nay," I continued, as his brows met in a swift contraction of pain and anger, "I am not bidding you go, or glad of your going, but what is imperative there is no evading."

"Not for me," said he through his teeth, "for others there is, it would seem."

I could not misunderstand this. A shiver ran through me at my disloyalty in listening. Yet I had no heart to reprove poor Sergius, who was always in the van when duty called.

He did not raise his eyes from the dead leaves on which we stood. An embarrassed silence

stole on us. I saw that the hand with which he held the rein trembled. I kept mine well within the cuffs of my furred pelisse, hoping he would soon remount, and then would be time enough for a friendly handclasp from a distance. That was not his thought, however, for he asked me in increasing agitation, "Did he deserve no friendly greeting or farewell?"

"Yes." I laughed, "but my hands are ungloved, and so hid to keep warm." Yet with a sigh I released one, feeling it uncivil to appear to doubt him. He flung the reins on his horse's neck, and taking it in both his, raised it to his lips.

"Do not be displeased with me," he said rapidly, "if I seem beside myself to you. What, if you but knew my misery and madness, should I not seem? I am in torment, Helen."

"Sergius," said I, "be advised against this—this illusion of yours. You have worked too hard—a long ride, a change of scene, a Highland welcome, and all your Southron ills will fade like a morning mist from your mind. Then be generous, and forgive us all, without exception."

"Do not preach to me," said he passionately, "for, by God, I cannot bear it! Say farewell, if you will, and I will go, as I must, but under no false conditions. A ride to Russia, a welcome

to Heaven, would not efface from my heart what is there burning, tormenting, haunting. Striven against it I have. Yet when writing at midnight you come between me and my work—between me and my rest. I thought myself faithful to duty. Yet now duty shows like the first-born of hell. It is distance, division, exile. I wish it were death and oblivion."

"Fancy," said I, "two flat-nosed skeletons talking so to each other, and another one up at the Hall being angry when he heard of it. Yet that is what death would make it, literally. Come, Sergius, I am glad you are laughing. As for oblivion, I bid her avaunt, for I would not forget my dearest friend."

"I am not laughing," said he sullenly, fixing his eyes moodily on mine. "Such a jest were heartless, if you could realise a tithe of my pain at parting."

I felt truly grieved for him, yet with a shrewd conviction that Sergius was too good an orator to be unpractised in pleading—an idea which brought a smile to my lips against my will.

"Another jest," said he most bitterly, taking off his hat. "Let me welcome its advent as Lear did when discrowned—mad and miserable." He was wandering away alone—bareheaded.

"Do not," said I, "be angry without a cause,

that is unjust. If you will mount I will walk beside you to the park gates, for I see no present use in your anger to me, though it may please you to remember it when we are parted."

He looked at me with so accusing, reproachful, and anguished a glance, that I repented accusing him of injustice, repented of jesting with his evident misery, and cast about how to make amends, without fostering further hopes or wild chimerical ideas.

"Sergius," said I, taking his hand, "if you went away hating me, from whatever cause, I should feel it, however courteous your parting words. Forgive me whatever I have grieved or hurt you. Do not think me unfeeling. I hold you one of my truest and kindest friends—only so much better than me as heaven is than earth. I think of you constantly—the toiler in a hive of drones, the bearer of the burden and heat of the day, while others are lapped up in trifling pleasures or lazy ease. Everything that is noble, I say—that is like Sergius. So far as sympathy, and a warm admiration of your zeal and talents go, I am your humblest admirer and faithfullest friend. Will you not cry content to that, and cease to think that none appreciate you or value you at your desert?"

He laughed bitterly.

"Stone for bread; talent, zeal, work, friendship, all recognised. Yet the hungry sent away to starve. The miserable to misery. The heart to agony. Praise I neither want nor merit. Why are you so callous to my suffering? Have I ever been indifferent to yours?"

"Sergius," I said, agitated in spite of myself by this strange, wild pleading, "you are ungenerous—cruel. You charge me with a fault I am incapable of. I am not indifferent to, nor forgetful of your friendship. Your sympathy, when I suffered, endears you to me—how else should I even listen to such wild words as you now utter?—words you will blush to recall when this mad mood has passed—as it will. It is treason to your friend—it——"

"My friend!" he interrupted. "Master, if you will, but no longer a friend. All his aim is incessantly to lower me in your eyes, because I yield to him for the sake of the large interests involved. I am regarded as a puppet—as a ladder to mount by and be kicked away—as a—— Do not talk of him, or by —— I will portray him in his true colours, that you will not know your hero and petted darling."

"He is neither," said I, smiling aside at this masculine spite, "and now you have well

scolded us both you will be again the dear friend and brother."

"I will be no d——d hypocrite," said he, relenting a little. "I do not regard you as a brother would, though I have striven to serve you as singly, sincerely, faithfully."

Now, thought I, he is getting reasonable, and will presently mount and ride off, comforted by sympathy and meditating vengeance in a milder form on his unoffending friend, which will presently give way to amity—for Sergius will find some sweet Scotch lassie to whom to tell his wrongs, and imagine that her blue eyes are pity, and her yellow hair is love—such is his fate. I smoothed down the soft otter's fur of my pelisse, not unconscious that my hand showed long, tapering, and pink, to every advantage against its rich darkness, amused with the solution I had imagined for him, yet comforted hoping that every moment would see him mount and ride off, conscious that any moment he might return to his wild thoughts and words.

"You have the hand," said he, "of a Medici, and the strange subtle brain. There is that in you that, without beauty, in obscurity, in seclusion, would gleam out to fascinate, allure, destroy—which appeals to the imgination, is resistless and unsubduable—a Greek fire, a power. Only once

have I ever met a woman like you, and that was in a Greek myth—a Lamia."

"A snake ladye," I said indifferently. "Well, do them justice—snakes only strike when threatened. The popular creed against them is cruel, and the Greeks were, as ever, the ministers of justice in imaging serpents as worthy more merciful consideration. See, I am not offended at your comparison, though you doubtless meant it to hurt me!"

"Do not," said he, "tempt me beyond my power to withstand. That absent, reflective, and melancholy air—the glance withdrawn, as if hopeless of comprehesion by gross mortality—I tell you, though I know your scorn of baseness or deceit, thousands of women would give all their beauty for the power of looking thus."

"Thus," said I, willing to wander away into any conjectural field, "thus, simply indicates fatigue. I am tired of standing: shall we walk on and, like two serpents who have cast their skins and spent their venom, shine out new, resplendent creatures? Did you ever know, Sergius, that snakes sing?"

In spite of himself, Kilmarnock burst into a short laugh at this assertion, and as we walked onward forgot his woe so far as to listen patiently while I told him a fact in natural

history hitherto unregistered, yet true, that many snakes utter a clear, bird-like, single note, comparable to, yet more musical than a sparrow's high, clear chirp.

We parted at the park gates, Kilmarnock more cheerful and rational for his outburst having received patient hearing, and happy in anticipation of frequently writing. He even went off with a laugh and a jest about my fabled serpents and their musical powers, giving his horse the rein, and turning frequently to wave yet another farewell. I was very glad to see his right mind return to him, wondering at the marvellous virtue there is in patience. Had I incensed him by anger or reproof, or gone about an ethical lecture, he would have parted miserably and left me unhappy; by a discreet listening, and sympathy, he was enabled to go cheerfully. Thus it is in mental as in bodily ailments: we must not grudge the wine, the oil, nor the twopence of the Samaritan, for the case which, in all its grievousness, is another's to-day, to-morrow may be our own. Thus, thought I, turning from a last distant wave of his hand ere he was lost to sight, thus are we fooled by our own fancies. I have dreamt that to own these great gates; these high, carved pillars; the Manor; the demesne; the huge oaks; the lake,

and the Clifford name were enough; yet I would, though I love Sir Burleigh, rather be free to go with Stuart, whithersoever he went. How can I now see him ride off, as Sergius has done? How retrace my way back to my empty hall, and fancy his footfall on the stairs, his shadow on the doorway, his voice in the dim study or sunny gallery? I will go over to the farm; possibly M'Causland may root up some of these sweet yet morbid imaginings. Anyhow, I owe him a visit. So, walking on in the narrow bridle-path, I met M'Causland riding home to dinner. He was, as ever, glad to see me, and we went in together, welcomed by the familiar fire. The whole place yet had a strange, far-off aspect, as though my absence from it were of a century's duration; but the only notable change was that Sandy's portrait was now hung conspicuously over the desk, on an eye-level, and, being remarkably well limned and like him, brought him almost bodily before me.

"I am glad of that," said I, walking up to examine it, "yet, when mine is taken, I shall turn Alexis out of my desk that you may look the more at me than him. He can take an obscurer place, having had his turn."

"That he is not like to do, Helen," said

M'Causland, rubbing his hands, "for he is yet farther promoted—he is lieutenant."

"You are buying his commissions," I laugh, "and want me to believe it is all his merit. Well, except I see the epaulette on his shoulder, I shall hardly believe in his lieutenancy."

"That ye shall see one day," he rejoined gleefully, "an' if I buy his commissions it is no out of your tocher, Helen. That is yet safe and untouched—till the auld carle an' the worms company together."

"Don't talk so, uncle; and, as for Alexis, ye should have let me help him on as well as you. Buy him a captaincy, and I will give half, let it be what it may."

"That is to say, I am to rob Sir Burleigh for Sandy, for ye'll but coax it frae him, an' greatly he'll think o' me for letting ye. No, no, be avised. I hae a kind an' liberal master, an' mony ways o' turnin' ower money, though I am no unjust steward. Sandy will do well eneuch. He is, apart from the folly o' lovin' ye (an' mind, I'll not say he does so still), a sensibu lad, canny, an' masterfu'—a real man. Sticks to a' his purposes, an' has a head on his shoulders. Blount is his good frien', and took him but of late to dine wi' his kinsman, the Earl of Tyrone, Sheriff o' a county, wha likit the lad, as a' men

do. God grant the women do not a' fa' in luve wi' him for his fine presence an' noble looks an' brave bearin'."

"Oh, he is safe enough," said I, not without a twinge of jealousy at thought of my vassal setting up on his own account. "It would take a woman a hundred years to get used to his red curls, and another hundred to get him to talk or pay compliments."

"That's a' ye know," said M'Causland mysteriously. "There was a cousin of the Earl's there, a Miss Margaret Carew, who, says Blount, took Alexis for the Colonel himsel'."

"The Irish girls are very forward wenches, it would seem," I rejoined, still more vexed. "I shall write to Sandy myself, and hear the rights of this."

"Why," said M'Causland surprised, "what is it e'en to you, Helen, if the lad gets a gude, well-born wife?—he is eighteenth cousin to a laird himself!"

"He is my cousin," I say coldly, "and now connected with the Cliffords, and I am sure Margaret Carew is no such great name."

"He is nae cousin o' Colonel Rohan's dochter," said M'Causland, "as ye are—it was but a sop for the countraside. Ye hae cousins

eneuch, did ye but know them, an' high-born-men too, but puir Sandy is na ane o' them."

"I don't want to know them," I cried, "nor would not recognise any kinsfolk but you, Sandy, and Verney Clifford, whom I am used to; the rest will ever be to me non-existent, as I have in the past been to them. Do not talk to me of my parents, I am your child."

"You are my darling," said he fondly, "an' as much, if fostering be aught, mine as their's. But ye are not angered wi' Alexis, Helen?"

"As if it were possible!" I replied. "But I don't want an Irish kern's daughter to take him away from us. Do you?"

"No," he admitted, "but the lad is masterful and bent on rising; he owns as much to me; as he says, having borne the yoke in his youth he would now shake it off. Ye remember he was ever chafing at Verney Clifford, an' I am afraid hated Sir Burleigh, wi'out rhyme or reason."

"No one could do that," I cried, "nor did Sandy. True, he hated Verney with some reason—in his place I would have killed him, but Alexis was ever reasonable and thoughtful for you."

"He was a gude lad, an' dutiful," responded M'Causland absently. "An' how go affairs up yonder at the Hall?"

"As usual," I reply. "We have some Jacobite guests. Sir Burleigh is very well. Verney got a letter yesterday from his wife, who threatens to come down. He swore he would not have her here, and we don't want her. Will you take her in?"

"Oh no," said he hastily, "I'll none o' Verney Clifford's wife; but by all accounts she is a beauty, milady, an' no Jacobite, so ye do weel to keep her frae the Ha' just the noo."

"I do not keep her—Sir Burleigh dislikes her. She gave extreme cause whilst with us—a more peevish, discontented, grampold woman could not be met in a thousand—she gives Sir Burleigh gout and me headache."

"Ay, and would now heartache," he replied, "for Jacobites are but men, an' she has a lovely face, let her temper be what it may."

"That I would risk," I said coldly, yet feeling that Stuart, for mischief's sake, and to retaliate for my supposed manifold offences to him, might affect to admire her, which would not content me at all, were it never so transparent a device to vex me.

"She were better to keep her bloom and her beauty in London," I thought, "yet I fear no rivalry." Then, to M'Causland, I asked for Sandy's latest letters. He gave them with a

cheerful air, yet with some reluctance withdrawing one or two which, he said, were on business matters only—relating, I guessed, to the several payments made for his successive steps in promotion—steps not to be obtained without both interest and money—both of which M'Causland could obtain at a word to Sir Burleigh, who had never held any dislike to Sandy, and might now be better disposed still.

M'Causland remained docketing his letters, standing for that purpose in the desk. I looked up. A ray of sunlight illumined both the portrait of Sandy, above his head, and his own stern, severe face. There was the same expression on both, varied in Alexis' by a disdainful sullenness, as of one conscious of higher deserts than he had then attained. Old memories of him came back in silent troops, treading softly over the oak floor, ascending the steps of the desk, vanishing into the broad frame of the picture. Could he have loved me, I thought, almost with a sigh, and yet, in two years, be forgetting me, and in hope of winning a high-born wife? I remembered his comparing himself to Bothwell, and now thought it was not a mere chance allusion to the old print, but that he had, in truth, some touch of his nature—that in him, James Hepburn, Queen Mary's lover, might have

recognised a similar daring, reckless, and ambitious spirit.

"Now he is free," I thought, "'twere as likely as to draw an eagle to a lure to seek to keep him in a humble position. Before, his strong affection for me and for M'Causland were his chains to humility and dependency. I would not like to count on his again subserving love to ambition."

Returning from these musings to his letters, I read one or two, noting, with a surprised pain and anger, his infrequent and, sometimes, even half-contemptuous references to me.

"Tell Helen Rohan," he wrote in one, "or Dame Clifford, or S. mistress, whichever title best please her, that going abroad into the world would cure a heart all broke in pieces Mine is riveted together with iron rivets. Thanks to her, I am cured of loving women, and can amuse an idle hour in their company, leaving it, without a regret or back glance, for my duties. Ah, tell her, that were she my cousin, of ever so distant kinship, I would not rest till I had my dirk at Stuart's throat—king or no king, prince or no prince But, as you say she is a Rohan, and no cousin, I bow to my betters, as you taught and she enforced, an' they may go their ways."

"So," I thought angrily, yet bewildered at this

sudden revelation of Sandy's sentiments, "you have elected yourself a judge. You, forsooth, would cover disloyalty to your prince on the plea that a little country cousin loved him too well. What is it to you, sir? I would you were near me."

In another of more recent date he wrote—"Blount has enlightened me to much that was before obscure, and the whole cursed business makes me glad to be where the sea interposes between us—for, taking Helen at her worst, there was that in her worthy of a true man's love. And, by all accounts, this——is a universal lover, an insidious serpent, on whom one's heel longs to grind down—grant me in battle one grip of his craig, if he breathe again my hand shall take to wool-carding or spinning. Can ye not persuade her, fool that she is, of his unworthiness? Blount tells me she is said to worship him, and that Sir Burleigh allows it, even encourages it, worshipping him too. I would I were near that adder's nest—I would charm them to some purpose, let them be never so deaf. For if not her kinsman by right, I am so by fostering, and that someone should find to his cost. You ought, on your conscience as a Christian" (went on the writer) "to reason with her. Why should she, with an honourable place in the world, be his mistress

and toy? Let him keep to his French dames, who, I am told, count such things honour. A good English girl, such as she was, and might again become, is no foreigner to be disposed and displaced at his pleasure. Blount tells me she trembles if his name be mentioned in a breath with battle, and went on her very knees to him to beg him, if it ever chanced that way, that they should meet, he would try to save his life. Is not this madness? I tell you 'tis disgrace. Blount loves her for her goodness to him, so would tell me but little, and that when he had well drunken. At other times he would draw on any man who should speak a word of her—which, as 'tis not generally known, is no need for. I design that such a state of affairs shall not continue, and will myself go on my knees to her to send him off."

"Ye see now," said M'Causland, on my returning the letters to him, apparently oblivious of the passages relating to me, "ye see how the lad is taken up wi' his duties, he didna' read the Gallic wars for naething, Helen. He is a born warrior, an' will yet be a general."

"I hope so," said I, with a sigh, "but I never want to meet ——"

With a cry of pain, dismay and anger, I rose. Sure the letters had invoked him—his name

drawn his wraith to us from beyond the Irish Channel. Alexis entered—dusty, weary, haggard, and travel-worn—in mufti, yet with enough military bearing as, together with his sword, to mark his profession. He fixed me with stern, unwavering eyes as I rose in amazement, saluted M'Causland briefly, and with a whispered word sent him from the room. "Now," said he, without a trace of tenderness or feeling in his stern monotonous voice, "I am come; ay, and have, since dawn yesterday, walked fifty miles, every inch toe-an'-heel walking, to set you straight—ay, an' by ——! you shall keep straight, at the cost of a life I'm told you prize."

"Who is your informant?" I said, seating myself, pale with anger and dread.

"One who knows," said Alexis; "but speech with you is not my present purpose. I will be speaker, and thank yourself if what I say be the deplorable truth. What I say is but brief: Give up Stuart as your lover, or, by ——, I will go over to the Hall, drag him out, and cut his throat."

"Then," said I, through my teeth, "go over to the Hall, drag him out, and cut his throat, for I refuse. Nor do I think his throat in present danger—from you."

"You devil!" said he, his face white, his eyes

contracting, as I remembered them but once before, "would you sacrifice the man's life?"

"He wears a sword," I say, "and doubtless values his life too well to give it up at your bidding."

"A very legion of fiends holds you," he said, "I will try gentler means, for I know no nether millstone less to be moved by fear than you. Look at my blistered feet. I have neither eaten nor drunk this day. Helen, for God's sake, do not anger me further with you. You have no kinsman but me, and what is my duty that will I do unsparingly. I say again, give up this lover of yours, who has fifty other loves, ay, a hundred, and I will go back as I came; refuse, and it will be none my fault if for present mistress he has not a sword-thrust or two."

"Did you truly walk fifty miles on so silly an errand?" said I. "Then remember, for all future time I am a Rohan. You are no kinsman of mine, nor bound by any law to register my actions. This outrage shall yet cost you dear."

"This, then," said he, "is my thanks, and your answer?"

"Will you have it in form? I refuse."

"Devil!"

"Is constancy devilish, then I am truly a devil."

"Constancy," said he, with a sneer that

revealed his teeth, "constancy to a man with a hundred such constant poor wretches. I thought you above reproach; by —— you are beneath it if you have sunk to such a puppet as to be fooled as well as ensnared by this bird-limer."

"You are talking like a book," said I, "and a very bad one. Cæsar was not freer of his commentaries. I hope he knew his subject better, however."

"That shall not put me off, Helen. For the last time, will you or no give him up?"

"Under what alternative?"

"His life!"

"By whose decree? if so august a judge will answer."

"Mine, and my sword's, Helen Rohan!"

"Clifford," I correct.

"To me you are Helen Rohan. To me the scoundrel Stuart is no more than our last recruited kern. I have come to make him repent this his latest iniquity, and if I do not—" he stopped, pale and breathless.

"Sandy," said I, "you are beside yourself. You have no right to speak thus to me. I refuse to listen further, and I warn you that your fire-new sword were better returned to a plough-share than raised to meet his."

"You are proud of this villain," he said

hoarsely. "Does he boast of the kinsfolk of his dupes whom he has slain, that you speak so confidently? Let that be as it may. Kill me or eat me—he shall feel what a Scot's arm can do for chastisement."

"Then," said I, "do not, as a Red Indian, kill your enemy twice—in words first, then in deed. I disclaim your interposition. Your threats are worthy of the ruffianly companions you elected to mix with. You have forgotten yourself in some chimerical vision—some heated dream—and have dared," I continued, casting his letters at his feet, "to write so of me to my best friend as would render him my enemy, if he did not make huge allowance for Highland folly and clownish miscomprehension."

His eyes withdrew themselves under the straight thick line of his brows, like those of a wild mountain cat, his hands trembled with rage. "You have profited," said he, "you will do. When he tires of you, any barracks in Christendom will open its gates to you—once speak as thus."

"Sandy," said I, "you are tedious. Blount told me much the same thing before; but, judging by sample, as we do when buying corn, I don't think I shall be tempted to make application to your paradise."

"You are a devil!" he repeats, in a bewildered, wondering kind of amaze.

"And you a soldier in want of rest and food, possessed by an idea fixed, and are extremely unpleasant, and rather dirty. We will, if you please, dine. I am M'Causland's guest as well as you, and I am hungry."

Alexis sank down into a chair haggardly, like one who has come off worsted in an encounter with a witch; his letters strewed the floor, his eyes closed, his hands clenched.

M'Causland came in stealthily, as though fearful of being ordered out again, finding a silence after the strife of words; he looked from one to the other, as though to know which was the vanquished, but said nothing, picking up Sandy's letters and tying them with string into a packet.

"Are we to have dinner?" I asked.

"Yes," said he humbly, as though conscious of having encouraged this attack from Alexis, and abetted it. "Ye like pheasants, Helen?"

"I like anything," I answered, "but chiefly soldier cousins."

The pheasants being brought in, Sandy, who had always a good appetite, revived, as a fine lady does at the smell of essences, and dragged his chair with quite unnecessary noise to the table.

He ate a great deal, and his eyes grew milder, the contraction went out of their pupils, as he surveyed the tempting viands ; he became less and less an Aristides, and for the present finally concluded to kick off his boots and go to sleep—deferring Stuart's execution.

I sat down with some knitting with which Elsie supplied me, watching him and wondering in what mood he would awake. I had no mind to play Cynthia to this Endymion ; yet, thought I, he must be won over, for if once he should go even peaceably away without becoming Stuart's friend, he might single him out in battle. That was an ever-present dread of mine, and though Blount, in his cups, had betrayed me, it was only to Alexis. Now I would bind him by the same vow—but how to do it?

" Elsie," said I, as she came in with a log for the fire, " bring in a small tub of warm water for Alexis' feet, they are blistered with walking. And do you—you are old enough to be his grandmother—take off his socks and wash his feet for him. It will not hurt you."

This I knew she would refuse, as too much courtesy to a soldier.

" Were he e'en a lad at hame, she said, " an' him coming so far to see us, I micht ; but a soldier, milady—I hope I ken better."

Elizabeth, however, had no such scruples. She came in, deftly removed the ragged and dusty socks, and lifting first one foot, then the other, placed them in the water. Blistered they were, and Alexis, awaking, was for withdrawing them ; but Elizabeth, laughing, insisted on his remaining still while she fetched some soft lambswool hose, which he put on with much contentment.

"Milady thocht of it," said Elizabeth, disclaiming thanks, as she collected socks, tub, and towel, and walked off with them. "An' a better than Helen Rohan ye could na' find, look where ye may."

"See," said Sandy, willing to recommence, "can ye tak the love of a' these in fause colours, Helen?"

"I don't know what you mean," I said, "it is natural to love those whose lives have passed with ours—natural to some, though not to you. You," I continued, "are cruel to me, why I cannot say. I think red-headed people are cruel by nature, and on principle like Judas."

"Let my red head alone," he growled, passing his hand over it not unadmiringly, for he was fully conscious of his handsomeness.

"I am not touching it, am I?" I retorted, "though I used to like to sink my hands on it,

I wonder are your curls as soft and thick as ever?"

I crossed behind his chair and tried. Samson in Delilah's hands emblemed his contentment, and I was only afraid lest the opposing steel mirror should too faithfully portray the upward curve of my lips, as, closing his eyes, he talked whilst I smoothed and patted his big head.

"You know," said he, sliding like an avalanche—or a man—at once from the highest pinnacle of ethics to the lowest ground of pleasure, "you know, Helen, if I spak' but roughly it was for your good, and a man shoudna speak when he is hungry an' angry. I will convince you by-an'-by, an' will hear no mair o' this ill-time scandal!"

"No," said I, "and if I was angry, forgive me, Sandy."

"That will I," said he, getting less and less ethical, "for to see ye is to love ye, and but for Stuart being so bad a man, I doubt he couldna help himself."

"He is not so bad," I say, "nor can you believe all Blount says of either. He is used to soldiers, and thinks the worst of everyone. But I am surprised at you, Sandy! To write so of me, to think so hardly of me, to meet me with accusation and reproach!"

"I couldna help it," muttered Sandy, remorsefully, "I was set on doing it. I cam' ower frae Ireland to settle it a'. I was tired. Ye defied me, Helen! Had ye been gentle as now, I shouldna ha' said one half, but ye proved a very tigress to reproach. An' it's a' or mostly fause, ye say?"

"That you shall judge for yourself," I said, coldly. "If you make such accusations at random, it is not my intention to help you out of the difficulties you so willingly plunged into. You had better return with me to the Hall, and see Stuart, and if he be so wicked a wretch as has been represented to you, carry out your expressed intention. I will shield no man from justice; but you must be just to both, Sandy, nor judge on Blount's drunken speeches of us."

"What do I know of it?" muttered Sandy. "If ye say it is fause, it is fause. It's with Stuart that he has so bad a name; 'tis hangin' for him, where another might not even be mentioned."

"Settle it how you please," I rejoined, "only remembering that if my name occur you will be very cruel and base to me; and for Blount, and his ungrateful, vile return of Sir Burleigh's goodness to him, I will myself take order—he shall not soon forget!"

"What need you care for Blount?" said Alexis uneasily. "I tauld ye he but spoke in his cups, an' we were alane too, an' I led him on; otherwise he is your humble servant enough, nor ever tires of praising ye an' envying Sir Burleigh, who is, he says, like some auld Dutch burgher wi' a priceless tulip. You——"

"It is a pity you are not busier than to have nothing but women to talk of," said I. "I hate this idle, scandalous gossiping, leading to frays and divisions. I hope it will be long ere you again think of me as you have been thinking of late."

"It will," he said penitently. "Somehow, at a distance, stories grow into huge dimensions."

"And foolish men walk fifty miles to get into the end of a rainbow—to fight shadows—to take care of other men's wives. Is not Sir Burleigh big enough to care for his own?"

"Yes," he admitted, "but they say he is another."

"Another?" I inquired.

"Another who dotes on Charles Edward—who thinks house, land, wife, wealth—even life—all made for him—so Blount told me."

"Was he sober?" I asked.

"No," admitted Sandy reluctantly, "but he said Verney Clifford told him, and he knows."

"Then," said I, "let either of them tell Sir Burleigh so; I should be sorry for them—for all he is a known Jacobite. And now promise, Sandy—if I forgive your abominable conduct and angry threats—to believe only what you yourself see—not what Blount or Verney tell you, or you hear from them. It is disgraceful that my own cousin repeats such things, much less credits them. Will you promise this?"

"Yes," said he sullenly.

"Then," said I, "you owe me some amends, and shall not refuse to dine with me at the Hall."

"How can I," said he, "in this dusty plight?"

"Pshaw!" I returned. "We are used to travelling dress. Besides, there is your Highland dress, in which you look so well. Go, put it on and wash your hands, for it is getting late, and Sir Burleigh will be coming to seek me."

Nothing loth to reassume his beloved kilt, which, being laid carefully by, was no worse than its last wear, Alexis went off upstairs, presently reappearing, looking magnificent, and no longer shy or diffident, though he was to meet his rightful Prince.

"Come on," said I, rather enjoying the idea of Stuart's surprise when I brought him this gigantic votive offering of a Highlander.

"I am in Hanover's service," said he, uneasily.

"This visit to Sir Burleigh binds you to nothing," I returned, and so he came with me hand in hand, as of old we used to roam about the park.

"You will meet Verney," I said, "but he is tame now."

"I have met his betters," said Sandy, haughtily.

"And Lord Lovat, Sandy, the cleverest of all the Jacobites, and another, whom we will not name for Hanover's sake—we used to call him 'Sir' in addressing him, which is enough."

"I know whom you mean," said Sandy, getting uneasy again, "I doubt I shall draw dirk on him after all."

So in the pale gold of the afternoon sun, now waning to the westward, we went on—neither thinking of our last walk in the park, any more than of last year's snow or yesterday's sunrise—both looking forward.

"If, said I, pausing once, "you think it will imperil your safety, or even your commission, do not come; but none hereabout know of whom we make guests. Janet and Craig are faithful, Verney is now in Lovat's power; yet I would be loth to persuade you to a shadow of peril or harm."

"You could not persuade me," he returned, "to other than an interview here, that is a fixed determination—for the result, let it be what it may, you are not answerable. I did not consult you in coming, nor could you sway my purpose a hair's breadth to avoid meeting him—either as I shall then judge of him, for peace or for war. Do not misdoubt that my two years' training in the world has given me a good insight in both policy and caution. I am now no reckless lad to set my fortunes on a cast, and need neither know nor suspect that my cousin's guests are other than Hanoverians."

"Then, as you are so resolved," I said, for we had stopped, "we will on."

The first to meet us was Sir Burleigh, riding, who bade Sandy welcome civilly enough, then rated me with my absence.

"Tell him what you said to me," I whispered to Alexis, who looked supremely uncomfortable at the suggestion. So different is it to rail at a woman's misdeeds, to even whispering of his to a man.

Sir Burleigh did not seem a man, either, to take very peaceably any reflection on himself or on me. His being a little angry at my absence, though he now knew its cause, gave additional sternness to his eyes and his fine features. I

felt quite proud of him, as he walked his cob beside us and talked to Alexis of Blount and his military life.

"You will meet a gentlemen," said he at length, "here, to whom you will be presented by name, but must not expect his name in return. If he, after, speaks to you, answer briefly, but do not address him first in any case."

Alas! thought I, how etiquette has suffered at my hands.

"Very well, sir," said Alexis.

We now reached the steps to the terrace, a bare six, wide, shallow and moss-grown, and flanked by heraldic lions. On one of these lions a figure was seated, watching our approach. For a minute I imaged myself as a stranger approaching Stuart for the first time, and trembled. The divinity that doth hedge a king was so present in the easy, natural and majestic way in which he rose and received Alexis—pleasure at the sight of the Highlander being present, but subdued in the dignity of the chief. Whatever cause of quarrel Alexis might have or suppose against him, all melted like snow at sight of the great chief on whom the hearts of all Hielandmen were centred. Awe-struck at being in very presence of the Prince, he yet bowed with a certain natural stateliness of demeanour—

as of one soldier saluting another of higher rank.

"This," said Sir Burleigh, who presented him, "is Alexis M'Causland, of a good Hieland stock, nephew to my steward."

"I am glad to receive you," said Stuart, "a Hielandman is always welcome to me, who am one myself."

Sandy again bowed low, but without reply, and, at a sign from Sir Burleigh, passed on, and I with him, into the study.

Verney and Lovat were there. I introduced him to Lovat. Verney gave him his hand in a friendly manner, as though indifferent, and Lovat, who was never at a loss, soon had Alexis in full tide of talk, while I went up to prepare for our evening dinner—putting on, in Sandy's honour, all the gauds I had, that he might not think himself the handsomest of the family. I told Sir Burleigh this, who was also dressing, and he said Stuart had called him a very fine-looking fellow. "As," he added, "he is. Drill and discipline have worked wonders with him."

"I hope you warned him," said I, "that he is in Hanover's service."

"Yes," said he, "but I misdoubt Hanover will see mighty little of him after this, for

the lad would not be flesh and blood to resist his lawful chief."

"Be that as it may," said I, "he must rule his own actions; being forewarned, Stuart will not tempt him."

Sitting in the light of many wax candles Sandy looked magnificent, dwarfing all but Sir Burleigh. He behaved with discretion and good sense, without awkwardness or *brusquerie*, and gained on all—his easy, yet respectful deference to Stuart, who often addressed him, being very pleasing. As was natural in our changed circumstances, his eyes dwelt much on me, as though bewildered in recognizing in the diamond-adorned lady the unassuming "signet writer" of the farm, or the angry cousin of the morning's meeting.

A novelty in any small society is always pleasing; it stirs up and stimulates every feeling, it arouses emulation. That evening's dinner was our brightest for some time. Sir Burleigh and even Verney grew proud of their sometime vassal. Lovat prospected him for a man-at-arms —Stuart admired him as a Hielander—he was, in short, a success. Nor did he lose in Verney's esteem by losing to him what he alleged was his monthly pay, at cards. Had it been really such, Sandy would not have parted with it; but he

knew Verney of old, and acted on his special knowledge with admirable skill and policy.

I withdrew soon after play began, and being tired soon went asleep. Sir Burleigh coming up at two in the morning awoke me.

"Helen," said he, "Sandy M'Causland has joined us. Nay, do not be alarmed, he returns for the present to Hanover, and will take safer order than to come to us from here; but he has sworn on his dirk a Hieland oath to serve Stuart."

"I wish," said I sleepily, "that he had stayed in Ireland." Then I again slept, dreaming of soft and sylvan scenes, in which I wandered alone and at peace, calm and happy.

* * * * * *

Night and morning are not more distinct, oft-times, the one from the other, than are the thoughts with which we close our tired eyes for a time on this world's doings, and the ready alertness with which they open again—to again resume their keen scrutiny of all action, passion, thought, or feeling, that may affect or influence that microcosm—ourselves.

From wishing Alexis safely back in Ireland, I woke with a pleasant sense that a dark, lowering cloud had been cleared away—that Sir Burleigh, Lovat, Stuart, all were pleased and gratified, both with Alexis' adhesion to their

cause, and the hope that this desertion from Hanover, at sight of his native Prince and countryman, was but as a signal for thousands more—as the first unclosed leaf of spring heralds in its wealth of bloom and promise of fruit. Above and beyond all this was that sense of personal influence, of power over others—which is more subtle flattering than incense to a god; which intoxicates us, and makes reason seem too cold for present use. Elate in this pleasant atmosphere of hope, which was equally shared by Sir Burleigh, we were in the study drinking our morning coffee. The sun shone in warmly through the half-drawn dark blue curtains, and the blue china of the cups on its silver tray was lit up brightly.

Sir Burleigh at length became impatient at the delay in Alexis' appearance, having, as he told me, arranged to go over with him to the farm, and there vindicate the part he had played in inducing him to join the Jacobites. For Sandy, so he told me, was resolved not to misinform M'Causland on any point. Having set down his cup, Sir Burleigh's impatience became extreme.

"Go, Helen," said he, "and fetch your cousin; the others will be still in their rooms, but he will long since be up."

I went upstairs, knocking at the door of his lodgment. A small anteroom led into the bedroom, which was the apartment Kilmarnock had occupied. At the door of this anteroom I knocked. No one answered, yet I heard voices. Sure that Alexis, who was always an early riser, was up, I crossed to tap at the door of his bedroom and give my message, when Stuart's voice arrested my upraised hand. The door was a trifle ajar, the blue *portière* inside held back by its silk cord. Alexis, used to the hardships of farm and soldier life, would not be likely to fear draughts in this protected chamber. Yet, what did Stuart, who was no ant for earliness, astir now, and in Sandy's room? Less from curiosity than in surprise, I waited their advent, expecting it momently; but the voices went on, Stuart speaking:

"Thus," said he, "though thanking you for your proffer of allegiance to my cause, thus it must be ratified—a Highland oath, which none ever yet broke, or breaking, fell into deserved vengeance. If you are not prepared for this, I absolve your last night's promise—the more so, as I know the influence of chief on clansman, of Prince on subject, and would not exert it to your hurt, or surprise any into joining us unwillingly."

Beyond, and shadowed by the blue curtain, I could see Alexis' face. It was pale and stern, his lips twitched under their thick curved moustache, his hand made no movement to take the dirk on which Stuart proffered him the Highland oath.

"Sir," said he at length, hoarsely, "for the honour you intended—by yourself, on your own sword, giving me the privilege of swearing allegiance—I thank you humbly as a clansman; but as a man—as one Highlander to another—let one question be answered between us, and on my knees I will give you the service of my life."

"As one man to another, as Highlander to Highlander, Prince and chief aside, will I answer any true clansman," said Stuart. "What is this quest of yours, sir?"

Alexis' face grew sterner, his eyes contracted with a fierce anger, as he fixed them on Stuart's face, now in view—waiting, cold, composed, yet something wondering, for the question.

"It is," said Alexis—and his words, like a well-conned speech, came slow and distinct—"it is not long since, though long or short matters little, that in danger of your life you went to the farm, hunted there by dragoons from Letchford. By a chance, by the courage, the genius,

the inspiration—for no one else could so ably have carried it through—of Helen Rohan, your life was saved. What you became to her, how you repaid her, is not my present quest. I loved her, and still love her. I could not nor would have resisted any similar temptation, and am no hypocrite to say so. Yet what was then venial would now be crime, if in defiance of all faith and honour you still pursue her. Before, therefore, pledging myself to this walk of life or death, I demand to know, as her kinsman—Are you her lover yet? As one Highlander to another your word is pledged to answer me."

"Is this," thought I, in dismay, "your smooth policy? You have, traitor-like, trapped us all."

For a moment an intense silence fell—the slow, unmodulated tones of Alexis left no vibration or after-wave of sound.

"Sir," said Stuart coldly, "there are limitations to everything. In promising you an answer to anything personal to myself, I gave a pledge I am still willing to fulfil; but no Highlander ever held confession as clansman's due to clansman, even were there grounds for it; reconsider your foolish words, which are those rather of a hot-headed boy than a man of the world, as you must be. Think them—as they should have been—unsaid, and I will pardon them."

"Thus, then," said Alexis, breaking the dirk across his knee, the snap of it being audible, "thus I break and cast away allegiance to you, forbearing vengeance only that I should have sought it first. Yestereve, the influence of chief on clansman held me, but no spell can bind me to dishonour. Take back sir, the dirk on which you were willing I should subscribe allegiance to a Prince without gratitude, pity, or friendship. Should we ever meet again, it will be as enemies, when I will force that answer from you now denied to me."

He flung the broken dirk at Stuart's feet and turned. Long ere he entered the anteroom I had glided out—not downstairs, where Sir Burleigh waited, but into the chill silence of the picture-gallery. Thither, by some chance, came Stuart—pale, haggard, and troubled. We met like two ghosts afraid to face the living world. I was conscious of being as pale and troubled as he. After the little triumph of last night—the bringing-in of an adherent, the warm and kind reception Alexis had met from all—his dejection was very bitter—bitterer still the cause, so plainly put in words, so harshly pressed home, so unextenuated by any pleadings—as though, to me, the life I had saved were not now dearer to me than my own.

"Helen," said he, endeavouring after cheerful speech, "be prepared for ill news. Your hot-headed Highland kinsman has returned to Hanover."

"On what plea?" I asked, as indifferently as I could.

"Nay," said he, "on a madman's plea—that I would not elect him arch-priest or conscience-keeper—some such reason, if he choose to call it so, he gave me. He is a handsome fellow, and would be a good man-at-arms; but for the rest he is a fool and presumptuous coxcomb, rating himself far beyond his value."

"So it would appear," said I, "yet he used to be quiet and amenable enough. Colonel Blount has pampered his high opinion of himself, and so made him froward and stiff-necked."

"Is Blount his Colonel?" asked Stuart with interest.

"Yes," I replied, "M'Causland is his adjutant and a lieutenant, and, by accounts, his greatest friend."

"That, then," said he, "partly accounts for his insolence. Is he trustworthy, Helen?"

"As ourselves. Not a word will pass his lips of seeing anyone at the Manor—nor would not if his life hung on it. So far I will answer for him."

"For the rest, then, we will dismiss this peevish Scot, who quarrels with his country, his Prince, his duty!"

"What will Sir Burleigh say?" I asked.

"He will, likely, not inform Sir Burleigh of his changed design," was the careless reply. "I think—nay, know he will not; and, as his return to his regiment, for a time, was agreed on, so all will arrange itself. There!" he continued, as, drawing near one of the windows, we saw Alexis walking farmward, accompanied by Sir Burleigh, who leaned his hand familiarly on the younger man's shoulder, "there is proof he has held silence; for amity, had he spoken, were impossible. Sweet, have you no kiss for me this morning? I have had a bad night, and to-day must away to Leith. Early this morning came a letter from Kilmarnock, urging our immediate return to Scotland. I must, therefore, go. Sergius has a heart of flint; all this business of detail is as well in his hands as mine."

"It is better so," I rejoined. "You have now been here long enough to get your presence too widely surmised for your own safety."

"That," said he laughing, "is always your plea when desirous of ridding yourself of me. It was so at the farm. That parting was a bitter one to me. I shall never forget it. The rain

came down in rivers, else might Sergius have seen the rain from my eyes as I thought of you, left unprotected, to chance. Ours has been no happy, peaceful love—yet it is the love of my life. Storms assail only to root it the firmer in my heart. Death would be welcomer than the loss of you. Life without you is to me impossible. You are my star, my hope, my life, my soul, Helen! Can you let me go to Leith alone?"

"Lovat will be with you, and your messenger."

"Yes, as these pictures are with you. An image, an eidolon, is very satisfactory up to a certain point. Would you not truly like to see Leith? 'Tis the oldest harbour in Scotland; its charter to Edinbro', granted by Robert the First, in thirteen hundred and twenty-nine, proves this. It has a great trade, and will now import a broken heart unless you come too. You, Helen, are a heartless, worldly, wretched girl. Any other woman would prefer a garret in the old town, to all this useless size and vacant space. You—so your Titians can stare on you with their unseeing eyes, will endow them with as much life as, in your thoughts, to companion you. Cold and worldly pride is your idol, or how could you tolerate the frequent unnecessary partings we undergo? I sacrifice all for you. You

withhold from me even the consolation of your presence. It is cruelly hard. You are stone—flint! Sir Burleigh is willing to come, Lovat has asked him. Must you always give the death-blow to my hopes? Unless you are near my thoughts wander—I can concentrate them on nothing."

"Thought is swift, it will soon bridge the distance from here to Leith. Have you breakfasted?"

"Yes, in my own room; but that is an evasion. Why are you laughing?"

"At you," said I, "as usual. Whose is this fire-new Leith scheme?"

"Lovat's," he asserted mendaciously, "and a very good plan it is, our followers want heartening. The sight of Sir Burleigh—his known wealth and influence—will be important aids to us."

"Then take Sir Burleigh!"

"And do you," said he, getting angry, "remain behind, queening it amidst these old pictures—as much a picture, as cold, as heartless, lifeless, as they. Would God I were a picture also!"

"So you are," I asserted. "Picture of a Stuart, taken in an angry mood. Special value attached by the artist to his lank hair, which was true to life—commonly, but erroneously,

supposed to curl; seated on a window-seat at Burleigh Manor, rating the pictures!"

"Nay, come here," said he, "and don't be a fool!"

"The moment chosen by the artist," I continued, "is when he proposes a paradox to a Clifford dame."

"A journey to Leith," he sulkily corrected, "and come you shall, Helen, all jesting apart."

"To Leith!" I exclaimed. "To a garret, a broken-windowed, wretched, cold, and mouldy tenement. I should see the ships' masts, and an old Scotch dame would bring me sour porridge to sup, and wonder who I was. I should get influenza and sneeze all day, finally let myself down by the window-cord and run away. Be ashamed of yourself, Robert the First, for granting a charter to such a place!'

"Well," said he, "to such a place must I go alone. The meanest garret would be heaven so you were there. You cannot image the wretchedness of my life apart from you—miserable, lonely, sad."

Thus possessed, he argued, entreated, lamented, expostulated—till Leith and its narrow streets, shipping, and fisher-folk, came before me like a picture, displacing and driving away the size, loneliness and calm of the Manor.

The thought of the busy life frightened yet held me, the quaint fishing dress of the women attracted my imagination ; but chief among the ten thousand reasons that rushed upon my mind, demanding to be heard, was—He will be there !

There, yet alone ; there, and sad ; there, with no true friend to share his hopes and fears, with but men around him, hard and unsympathetic. All this influencing me, I yet steadfastly refused to entertain the scheme, flouting it as ill-considered and untenable.

He at length held a sullen silence.

After an early dinner we all went into the stable-yard to see them mount—to say farewell !

"Helen," said he, as he held my hand, "do not refuse my last prayer, nor send me away miserable. Come to Leith if Sir Burleigh, as Sergius begs him, will. Do not oppose it, or kill me by remaining behind."

As I would not promise, he went away angry and reproachful. His coldness none affected me, he would repent it ere a league was passed.

Sir Burleigh rode a mile or two with them, and came back very cheerful.

"It was time he went," said he, "though I feel his going ; yet for his own sake he hath had too long stay, and should have gone with Sergius.

Lovat we shall also miss. It is doubtful now if Verney can put up with Darby and Joan. Helen, I hope he will not import his wife, or I shall be tempted by Lovat's scheme."

"What is that?" I asked.

"Not a bad one," responded Sir Burleigh; "to go to the neighbourhood of Leith for the rest of the winter. Lovat's cousin, the Laird of Stellarig, has an estate there. He is, 'tis true, but an old bachelor, yet you would not miss or mourn women folk,always being so much with us."

"Us," said I, "are very improving company. Who would be there, sir?"

"Only those who were here, with, perhaps, a stray flight of our folk, who would come and go at night."

"What is the house like, Sir Burleigh?"

"Chiefly gables and garrets—a d——d old barracks, which is what it is meant to be when we begin to move. Stellarig, however, will be indemnified, and counts on a castle, at least, in exchange."

"I have never asked you, sir, but when all is won, will it materially affect you?"

"Only to the extent of a barony or so, Helen; you will but change me for an earl."

"I like you best as you are," I sighed, thinking of the uncertainty of so enormous a project

as was this rising, with a handful of enthusiasts, against an established Government, with a people fairly dealt by, and indisposed to great risks. It was, I well knew, a dire offence to hint at failure, to be other than a true believer in Divine right. All my hopes were with it, yet reason whispered against.

Sir Burleigh, who was sensitive on this point, grew vexed with my reflective silence.

"May I not, then," said he, "count on the Countess Clifford's pleasure in promotion? You will not then be my glad and happy helpmeet, but a railer at vanities, of the Knox school."

"No," I sighed, "but I love you so well as Sir Burleigh. As a great man you will love me less, perhaps wish yourself free of me."

"That is as likely as wish myself dead. It is for you—to see you the pearl of a Court, the good influence of ——" here he stopped abruptly, adding, "What say you to the Leith scheme, Helen? I see no objection; though great folk here, there we might pass for a burly skipper and his handsome wife. Lovat says it will help them on to, to show me to their poor Scotch lairds. A man with eighty thousan' a year or so, though he lives but like a squireen, is a plum in their porridge. And why not take all means for pushing things on? It is no time for half mea-

sures. France will grow weary of waiting—the French are like a lot of d——d old women; they have no patience—yet, as we rely on them for substantial aid, they must be humoured."

I looked at the calm familiar landscape all around us. No sound save the distant lowing of cattle. I looked at the lake, whose dark surface was ruffled by a cold wind; at the huge oaks, not even yet stripped of their russet leaves; at the glades and dells; at the distant gates, yet in sight, through which I had so often passed on peaceful interests.

I thought of how beautiful it all was in itself; how lovely in the spring showed the large demesne; how stately and spacious the Hall was, with its long corridors, its state rooms with their broidered hangings; of the picture-gallery, my ever-favourite haunt. Of their value I knew, but their charm from my childhood had been apart from this; the dark Titians might reproach me with desertion, since none there but I valued them. I thought then of M'Causland lonely at the farm; I thought of Sir Burleigh, and in a breath, of a giant oak uprooted and lying low in the ferns.

"I cannot," I sighed, "image you away from the dear Manor, nor on so dangerous a journey as this would be."

"The dear Manor," said he, with an oath. "What is it to me, if a friend's life is at stake, to stand musing, like a d——d poet, on the centuries an oak has lived, or will live; on the softness of park turf? Granted," he continued, softening, "I like you that you love the Clifford home; yet, Helen, I should like you the more if these weighed less with you than my wishes, if I can part with them surely you may. Will you come to Leith or no?"

"No," said I, determined to make a stand at this fresh tyranny of Stuart's, for so I rated it, Lovat being merely his mouthpiece. "Here we are happy and peaceful, and a submitted list of your rent-roll will content the hungry Scots without seeing you."

"That," said he, "is not Sergius' opinion. Lovat told me he would be overjoyed to have his hands so strengthened as by my presence, and there is no real danger."

Again Leith rose in seductive picture to mine eyes—the sea, the ships, the quays, the crowds; all at length dissolving into one tall figure, a lonely, sad, and melancholy presence, uncheered by any, left to his own moods, to bitter thoughts of me.

"Can you not go without me?" I asked, to check this dangerous relenting.

"No," said he. "To take you with me is to safeguard my journey from political suspicion, should it become known; besides, I could not part from you, I cannot live without you, Helen. There's a honeymoon speech, my dear, yet 'tis true. I am used to you, I should imagine you ill, or in danger, in some distress, and precious soon leave their Stellarig barrack to see after my treasure."

"Do not make me go to Leith, Sir Burleigh."

"I will not make you go, my dear, yet what peevish objection can you conjure up against it? Sergius will be there, and Lovat, all our friends—old Stellarig, too."

"And young Stellarig?" I asked.

Sir Burleigh laughed. "Not of that ilk, anyhow. For, as I told you before, the Laird is unmarried; yet there may be half a dozen for what I know. Now, my dear, say you will come to Leith. Never mind the d——d pictures. I'll send a waggon-load on before, if they stop you, and Sergius will ding up nails for them and have them ready for you, all a-row, as here."

"It is no use," he said, when I urged the danger of going, "I am in for it now. A year's more income if it fail; if it succeed, as it must, the honours and rewards of a faithful adherent; nor would I have it otherwise. I have lived for

it and can but die for it; hesitate I will not. Others play for higher stakes than mine. Yet can I truly say, with Shakespere's Jew:

> 'Life itself, my wife, and all the world
> Are not, with me, esteemed above thy life;
> I would lose all—ay, sacrifice them all,
> Here, to this devil, to deliver you.'"

"That Jew," said I, "was no Christian to speak so."

"Any Christian who should not think so were a Jew, and worse," said he—"a traitor and renegade. Here is a history as sad as ever disgraced this earth: A young Prince, for claiming his own, hunted—a price put on his head like a criminal—his followers tortured and robbed, or securing themselves by bribes to placemen, who, so long as they can quietly suck their blood, will not cry havoc on to them. A foreign, mercenary prince, of ignoble and ignorant presence, set over the noble, the learned, the free. The nobility of England chafed and cowed—held in check by a coward rabble of the people. The people, forsooth, ignorant of the German harpy they have invoked—of his greed, cunning, grasping and mean avarice—of the endless swarms that his sterile country will inflict on us—bowing to their clay-footed, brazen idol, whom their children's children will curse them for inflicting on the country! Shall we, who know, make no

effort to better this state of things? I wish, for the lad's sake, I had a million; all should go for him freely, as the little I have is offered. I grudge no sacrifice to free ourselves; to have again for us and ours the noble, learned, magnanimous, brave Stuarts. The German hog is no sovereign of mine, nor ever shall be. Let Verney, who is but of bastard blood, choose who he may. He is no true Clifford who opposes his true Prince!"

Thus oracularly spoke Sir Burleigh, and then, relapsing to his former subject, he planned so easy and, apparently, safe a journey to Leith, that, knowing opposition useless, I agreed to accompany him, having withstood him against my own inclination and for his safety.

"You know," said he, when this was settled, "that M'Causland, 'Sandy,' returns to Ireland—but only for a time. He rode away whilst I was at the farm, a man with him to bring back the horses. He bade me bid you farewell. Have you and he quarrelled, Helen?"

"Yes," said I, "but Sandy was ever unreasonable, and it is nothing new, Sir Burleigh."

"Ay, ay," said Sir Burleigh. "Doubtless, he was in the wrong; he was always a precious handful to M'Causland. However, he is off.

So now we will in and plan our safest measures. I must see to what Craig will pack for me."

* * * * * *

A country cart, by what route I know not, took the large chest in which—taking Sir Burleigh at his word, and aided by Janet—I packed half-a-dozen of my favourite Titians, together with the pale-faced "Mistris to a king," and a few little cabinet pictures of nymphs and satyrs. These made but little difference to the aspect of the gallery, being taken from here and there. I did not consult Verney's feelings, who despised paintings—nor M'Causland, who saw to the transport north of the heavy kist. He would have judged me idolatrous in thus taking them. Verney regarded them but as saleable lumber, for which lunatics would, at uncertain intervals, bid crazy prices, or again refuse them at a gift. He went, besides, by the bigness of a painting. Had I carried away a battle-piece, as large as a barn-door, he might have grumbled. For the Titians he cared no doit.

As we conjectured, Verney could not long endure the dulness of the Manor; and in a day or two, on the plea that he must see his wife, or risk a divorce for desertion, he rode off, well supplied with money, and so limed by Jacobitism

as Sir Burleigh said would make singing about it unprofitable to himself.

When he was off we set out, bidding Janet and Craig be careful housekeeps—keep the Hall clean and habitable; keep a strict silence to our movements, to let it be supposed it was townwards—whither all persons of quality went in winter—and see that the gallery windows were closed against the damp mists, and Beech well fed. Poor Janet wept freely at our departure, Craig looked miserable. They were both of Hieland stock, and as true as steel to us and our Jacobites. There was no fear from indiscretions in speech from them. Each in their own domain led a hermit-like life—Janet in the kitchens, Craig in the gabled attics.

"Why," said Janet discontentedly, flouncing about the big kitchen where I stood, having been engaged penning a letter for her—"why need Sir Burleigh take you, Helen Rohan? There's Craig!—an' ye were safest here wi' M'Causland; an' safer for him, since men's eyes will be speerin after ye, an' askin' who ye are."

"It is settled that I go, however," said I. "So do you finish off Dick's letter and cease lamenting."

I lit the wax for her, and Janet becoming

interested in the ceremony of dropping kisses accurately on the cover of the letter, forgot for a time her grievance of our departure, and suffered me to escape further lamentings, remarking that "If Craig hadna been an auld fule he had learned to write in his youth, which wad now ha' been a crown o' glory to his grey hairs"—a metaphor which meant that he might have stepped into my shoes as secretary.

Turning from this to a roast which had stopped and was burning, I took the letter, and saw the last of Janet, outlined against a big fire, while, priest-like, she gently swayed a censer, in the form of roast turkey.

For the first stage of our journey we had the farm gig, M'Causland mournfully riding beside us, as though to a funeral. He had prophesied evil things of this journey, but was now silent. We did not go direct, but halfway to London, meeting there the northern mail, which had as passengers but four mournful-looking Scots returning to their country after a sojourn in Babylon, bringing, as it were, their untuned harps to hang on the thistles of their hungry native land. The parting with M'Causland was very grievous and bitter to all. I then regretted not having made a more determined stand against coming. I had, it is true, yielded only to strong pressure—

yet why have yielded at all? Had he gone alone, Sir Burleigh would, as he said, have hurried back to safeguard me—having me with him, what strong motive would now hasten his return? Alas! alas! each step took us nearer the precipice; each melancholy stage in the rain, with the steaming horses and jangling harness, with the four rawboned and hungry Scotchmen, with the dirty inns and wretched dinners, with the execrable wines. Janet might well liken me to an uprooted flower—I was as helpless, as disgusted, as any garden rose cast on a highway amongst weeds and dust. Though naturally brave, one of the Scots frightened me. He was like none I had seen before. To my mind he resembled the passage in the play-book where it says: "Enter first murderer! Enter second murderer!" Every time he came into the coach I thought of this—for either of those parts his appearance fitted him.

Sir Burleigh, in his large fur-lined travelling-cloak, now wore a modish wig, which disguised him to me so effectually that sometimes I scarce knew him. The road was dull and inexpressibly dreary. All my care was to sit well away from the uncanny Scot. Generally well bulwarked by Sir Burleigh, I managed this. Once, with a headache, he went on the box beside the coachman,

and I was left alone with three of them. I drew down my veil, yet through it found myself watching him—the tall one—as one watches an object of dread.

"Dinna fear me," said he at length, as though interpreting my thoughts.

So startled was I by this that unawares I faltered out, "What—what are you, sir?"

"Listen!" said he. "The bonny young liddy tak's me whiles for a Jacobite. Ay, an' it's not you alane, madam. I have been persecute aften an' aften for Prince Charlie's vera sel—sae great likeness is between us."

"Yes, truly there's nae mistakin' a Stuart mon," responded his friend. "Ye hae ay his vera een, an' to save trouble should spectacle yersel'."

"That must I," he replied complacently, and went on to give instances where he, a leather-seller travelling to the Highlands for hides ("For I aye tan my ain leather, mem"), was humbly asked to grace a clan wedding, being mistaken for, "Wha knows," he said with a dull vanity, that, seeing it sincere, disarmed my fears of him.

On stopping at Edinburgh we were met and conducted by a servant out of livery to a neat lodging. Feeling at parting a slight revival of

suspicion, I asked our conductor if he knew who our fellow-traveller was.

"That crazed fule," said he, "is Saunders Frazer, a leather-seller. He is a bit weak here, but nae gret hairm in him, mem."

I felt great relief at this, proving how weak was my stoicism in action, how unfit for the chances and changes of a doubtful cause. I trembled now at the very name of Jacobite, lest some should apply it to us. Here, in this stronghold of suspicion, I felt afraid with a mortal fear for Sir Burleigh, and he, thinking I shivered with cold, ordered a large fire to be built up, and himself took off my travelling gear.

But nothing eased the terror of this entrance to the lion's den. In my dreams, visions of strange faces, denouncing us as plotters against their city, pursued me. We had two small bedrooms, and my troubled sleep lasted till late in the morning, when the clang and resounding noise of city life awoke me to more cheerful thoughts. A maid brought me hot water and obligingly helped me dress, which, being weak and unnerved, I could scarce do myself—*deracinée* expressed my every bodily and mental feeling. I thought with pain and anguish of the Manor—not for myself, but for Sir Burleigh—and of Stuart with anger and indignation, when,

for his own pleasure or caprice, he could induce so true a friend as Sir Burleigh into unnecessary perils and useless discomforts.

"That will do, Jessie," said I (her name, she told me, was Jessie Sinclair), as she buckled my shoes—and, being dressed, I entered the sitting-room by one door, as Sir Burleigh came in by another.

"You look ill," said he, in a vexed tone. "I hoped a night's rest would restore you."

"Do not be vexed," said I, the ready tears rushing to my eyes as though at a reproof from him, to which I could never steel myself.

"Vexed," said he, embracing me, "that is very likely. All my vexation is that I have to leave you for some hours. Do not sit alone, let the little maid who waited on you bring her sewing and talk to you."

"Very well," I agreed—afraid to say how much I feared his going abroad into the city, and drinking boiling coffee, forgetting the milk.

"Here," said he, as the maid came in with a broiled haddie, "you can sit with this lady awhile; my business calls me out."

"Vera weel, sir," responded Jessie, drawing a chair to the table, "an' is it haddie ye'll have, mem, or a drap parritch?"

At this literal acceptance of his invitation,

Sir Burleigh looked something thunderstruck, which made me laugh. He smiled too, and, hastily ending his breakfast, departed.

"Is yon your gude-mon?" inquired Jessie, gazing after him, "or only like to be, seeing ye had separate rooms."

"Are you troth-plight?" I asked, thinking that the answering of questions to Jessie's class is opening an unprofitable traffic of words.

Fairly launched on her own affairs, yellow-haired Jessie forgot ours, and introduced by name to me so many lovers—gallant 'prentice lads, Leith fisher-lads, soldier-laddies, writers, smiths —even a precentor, whatever he might be—that, in amaze, I asked were all these hers.

"Na, na," said she, "I canna richtly claim them a'. Some I speer, but they dinna speer me—whiles when I'm cleaning windows, whiles on errants to the fish-stalls or the shops, I hae but twa oot o' the ail lot; but grant I live lang enuch, the rest may hae a chance. I'll aye speer for a callant wi money, an' no a wheen Jacobite."

"Jessie," said I, willing to dispense with her loquacity on civil terms, "get me some worsted and knitting pins, I must make some stockings."

"For that great grazier-mon?" inquired

Jessie—indicating that she meant Sir Burleigh, by pointing out the door he had gone from.

Going briskly down, she soon returned with the yarn, which I worked at assiduously, dismissing Jessie to her work. Her bootless chat had, however, done me the good of relieving the tension of my thoughts, and an hour's sleep, in which I presently indulged, still more chased away my uneasiness. About twelve the man-servant brought in a luncheon-tray, a cold fowl and some wine, very tolerable Burgundy; he carved the fowl and waited in profound silence, withdrawing with his tray without a word.

"Drink," says St. Paul, "no longer water, but take a little wine," and I would add, "let it be Burgundy." I know no wine more cheering in its effects. Port is heavy and sleepy, many others heady and fiery. Burgundy, when sound and not sick, as it sometimes will be, is a good medicine for dull thoughts, and for its sickness a sea-voyage will cure it. Meditating on the qualities of wines is not very profitable employment of the mind; but, clipped in by the four walls of the small room, one naturally dwelt on trivial things. There was a small clear fire of sea-coal—everything was small and looked mean. I felt as though in another existence, a narrow and bounded one. I longed fervently to be

back at home, safe and untroubled. I feared to think of the thousand useless dangers we had invoked by our coming.

Alone, dispirited, and unhappy, unheeded tears dropped on to my work as the slow hours passed. Evening closed in, earlier it seemed to me, in the quiet, dull bye-street. Sir Burleigh did not return. A little tea was brought me by Jessie, who was arrayed for going out, and too intent on her own schemes to desire to talk; doubtless in the morning I should, if I wished it, hear enough of chatter. Meantime, the quiet in the house grew profound, unendurable—for in the country are always little sounds of life. The sense of being so shut up suffocated me, and the unusual neglect shown by Sir Burleigh inflicted on me a dull sense of pain. My head ached—I sunk it in my hands, and bowed both upon the table.

Old memories crowded back upon me. In reviewing my life I could not fix on the first step which led me away from peace and happiness; ethically it had, of course, commenced at the farm, but ethics seldom enter into self-commune; besides, I knew otherwise—knew that all happiness I had centred in Stuart. Where, then, had been the point of departure? Alas! where? Perchance not in me at all, but

in the nature inherited from others—in the pride, in the ambition, which sought to subordinate love, which could not content itself without worldly advantage, which had shut love within a gilt cage.

"Yet," thought I, "what a miserable wretch I had become had Sir Burleigh not taken pity on me. The pitied, perhaps despised, of Stuart—a thought bitterer than death. It was no use, all thoughts drifted like tangles of dead sea-weed on to a desert shore. Life is there none in conjectures of what might have been, but poison in plenty. I raised my head, resolved against indulgence in metaphysic subtleties and vain and silly retrospection. The past was dead in its folly, its beauty, its joy and sorrow—it could return nevermore, except in haunting dreams—but whither led the present? I arose, and, stirring the fire to a blaze, looked into its dancing flames sadly. Voices on the stairs recalled me. Sir Burleigh came in, accompanied by an old man, who bowed low, and then fixing on spectacles, followed up his introduction to me as Laird of Stellarig, by a broadside of Scotch staring. He had small, light-blue eyes, and rather high features—yet insignificancy characterised his face, self-importance his manner.

"I have been telling my friend, Sir Burleigh,"

said he, "that though Stellarig is in no plight for ladies, being for years dismantled of all but useful plenishing—yet you, as lady of so good a friend to the cause, are welcome, should you choose to come. Not but," he continued dissuasively, "this is a vera neat lodgment, muckle mair fitted to your ladyship's needs—for Stellarig is, in respect of women, a peaceful hermitage."

"It will be," I rejoined, after thanking him for his offer, "as Sir Burleigh decides for me, sir."

"I may mention," he went on, waiving my speech aside, "that a large kist came to Stellarig for you, and is now at the porter's lodge, awaiting your pleasure either to remain or be removed here."

"Remove it here, then," said Sir Burleigh angrily. "I was led to believe that you, sir, had transmitted a most pressing invitation to us through Lovat, but must confess it looks as though we were misinformed."

"Not at all, not at all!" said the Laird. "But, to be plain, Sir Burleigh, if all our wives and womankind were introduced, Stellarig, from a safe meeting place, would become a centre of Government suspicion. This lady is, I am sure, as discreet as she is charming, and will be content, knowing the weighty cause of your absence, to await it here."

"Certainly," I interposed, rather amused at this plain-speaking.

The old man fixed me with his eyes, glanced at the knitting I held, hesitated, and then said:

"Yet the gates of Stellarig have been opened to bloom and beauty before now, and if your wife, Sir Burleigh——"

"My wife," said Sir Burleigh, "will remain here with me, and I must add, sir, that your communication of this had been better entrusted to me."

"Hoots, mon!" said Stellarig, "I can do my ain hoose nae injustice to describe it as a ruint auld barracks, not fit for mileddy's habiting, but I care na to entrust those words anent it to all lips, so Lady Clifford will understand it, I am sure, nae disrespect. It does for a wheen men folk, but a dainty leddy must be tended an' cared for, an' Leith is a cauld place, wi' the breeze blawin' in, an' noisy fisher-folk dryin' their nets aneeth the walls, an' auld men an' young men ramblin' aboot the rooms at all hours. I didna speak for mysel', but for the young leddy."

So saying, this upright and downright host took his leave. Sir Burleigh swore terribly, vowing vengeance on all and sundry, and, declaring that the little rooms fitted him like a skin, seized his hat and went out in search of others, return-

ing presently despondent, declaring he could see no place fit to live in but distant Holyrood, and he must either live in the street or die of asphyxia in our present abode.

This fury-fit, together with Stellarig's visit, gave me some amusement, helping to dissipate the gloom of the strange surroundings; and he, even, smiled at them after a time, telling me he had been to Leith but found no one he knew there, and, on presenting himself at Stellarig, had, as he described it, "Been invited to a poisonous luncheon of sheep's head and haggis." Our triumvirate had been away for a day or two, but would return on the morrow.

"Then," said he, "we shall be all right; for it takes Lovat or the devil to manage a Scotch laird on his own midden."

"Such a laird," said I, "might try the ingenuity of either the personages mentioned. Is he his own cook?"

"Judging by the infernal meal I had to swallow—yes," was the reply.

"Is the house as bad as he describes?"

"Worse," replied Sir Burleigh; "but for the interests involved I would never again set foot in it; but all personal feeling must give way, or nothing would prosper."

"Come," said he, presently, "'tis a fine moon-

light night—let us take a walk so far as to Holyrood."

So, muffling up in a plaid, and he in his cloak and wig, we set off. I felt as though released from purgatory or prison, as we walked briskly along in the moonlight. Crowds of hurrying people passing and repassing, all seeming busy. There were groups of soldiers about the whiskey shops, some of them singing Hanover songs, but these the citizens seemed not to heed or listen to. Some young men in front cursed them freely for mercenaries, and reviled Hanover to each other. Amidst this expression of political or party feeling, we gathered enough to believe that, however disguised, Jacobitism was predominant in Scotch hearts, and our own grew more cheerful for the thought, and warmer.

"See," said Sir Burleigh pressing my hand, "we are not alone, Helen. Time is ripening this northern harvest."

Gaining the brow of Arthur's Seat, we sat down to rest ourselves, amid the ruins of St. Anthony's Chapel. Beneath us lay Holyrood —scene of so much joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain—now bathed in whitest moonlight.

"That," said Sir Burleigh, "will, ere long, be in our hands, and you, Helen, revelling with the rest."

"Ah, no!" said I, recalled from a reverie, "I do not want revelry. I am happy enough with you near me," and I crept under his large cloak, for the wind was chilly.

"Now," said he, passing his arm round me, "I am happy as the hermit whose this chapel is, before his love forsook him."

"Did she forsake him, sir?"

"Yes, so the legend says, and he forswore other bed and board than this ground and yonder well—cold comfort, Helen!"

"What was her name?" I wondered.

"Grizzle, or some d——d Scotch calling, no doubt," he rejoined. "All briers and thistles, the women here—nothing beside my English rose."

"You are too partial," say I, peeping out of the cloak to kiss him, "and this will make the hermit uneasy in his grave, and come out in defence of Grizzle's charms."

Yet that nor the silver moonlight tempted him forth—he was, perchance, dreaming in tranced rest of his love—forgetting her cruelty, her falsehood—remembering only his own love for her—forgiving her, as strong and loving hearts forgive the erring and feeble. I felt then how much I loved Sir Burleigh, that his love for me was as the golden mantle cast by the king

on the beggar-maid. I told him so, with a sigh.

"Nay," said he, "your happiness is mine. To see you content, there is nothing I could compass I would not attempt—I love you, Helen, with all my heart."

It was near midnight. The brown mountain lay around us; the dark palace below. Near us we heard the murmur of the fountain gushing from the rock. The lights in the city were diminishing in number. Below, hearts beat high for Stuart or thumped stolidly for Hanover, as interest or patriotism triumphed. A rough and craggy path to the right led down to the valley, but to-night it was too late to visit the palace, even to view its exterior—nor were we in haste to return to our narrow lodgment. In our craggy nook we imaged the story of the hermit and his lost love, only we were not silent; yet, now and again, words lapsed into thought. In one of these pauses came the distant sound of footfalls ascending the narrow, craggy path. They passed us—a man, followed, as though in supplication, by a woman. We could not see the face of either. They stopped a few yards beyond our seat, and we both started when the man at length spoke.

It was Kilmarnock, his tone was angry.

"It is to no purpose that you follow me, Ailsie. I come here to be alone, having much to think of."

"I tell you," interrupted the girl hardily, "that I will follow you; let you lie in your lodging all day, once afoot, I am your shadow."

"That," said he, "I will take order to prevent. I will relieve your necessities, but any such annoyance as you propose will oblige me to severity. See that church below us—to it are attached rings, to fasten such offenders as you by the neck. Where then could your errant feet wander?"

"After you. Always after you," she said. "In spirit, if I could not get off bodily from the chains."

This rejoinder affected me considerably. Not so Sergius.

"Once for all," said he angrily, "will you cease your silly, senseless persecution of me? You have delusions, Ailsie, yet know enough to warn you from my anger. I wish you no harm, but this I will not suffer, my scanty leisure intruded upon by your crazy whims."

"Who made me crazy?" she returned, weeping. "I know whiles I am not like ither folk, but whiles I am—who made me so?"

"Here," said Kilmarnock, offering her money, "get home, Ailsie, to your mother."

"My mither," she sobbed, "demands to know why I am nae mon's wife? Why I am not yours?"

"Shameless callet," muttered Sir Burleigh. "As if a gentleman would marry her likes. I wonder he parleys with such a midnight hag."

Is it really Sergius? I thought, amazed at his apparent cruelty, for, as though listeningly, the girl turned her face in our direction, and, lit up by the white moonlight, it had a most beautiful appearance—long strings of yellow hair fell around it, and the beseeching eyes looked large and dark. She was muffled in a plaid, from which her small shapely head rose erect.

"Sergius is a villain," muttered Sir Burleigh, thus quickly reversing his opinion for mere beauty's sake.

"Ailsie," said Kilmarnock more mildly, "it is late and lonely, get home to your mother's. I will watch here as you go, that no mischance befalls you in the crag-path. Go at once—I have no time to waste. I have much to think of."

"You are in love," said she, "I have learnt that from the stars. You come here in the moonlight, alone, to think of her you love. I

could foretell, if I would, better than that dead and gone hermit, how it will end."

For a moment Kilmarnock hesitated—to him it must have seemed that the whole wide hillside was solitary as a desert, that the white moon alone witnessed his folly; for, to Sir Burleigh's intense amusement, he held out his hand to this sibyl, and asked in a tone of assumed lightness, "Tell me, then, how it will end?"

For a time retaining his hand, she looked upward, then said hurriedly—"In happiness and in death! She loves you, but you will die—die I say—so to what end is it your loving her? You will die, but she will love you dead—ay, till she herself dies, she will weep for you."

"Is that all?" he laughed.

"All!" said she, "and more than enough—to cause bitter grief to rive and rend a heart that will then love you—it is more than enough."

Slowly releasing his hand, she recommenced her own plaint of his cruelty, to which he paid no sort of heed, seeming wrapped in a reverie.

"Get home," he said at length, impatiently, "all this is an old song, Ailsie. You shall have your wants relieved—further, if you again follow me it will be at peril of the Tollbooth. I warn you fairly."

For a moment, as he ceased speaking, the girl still listened, her wild appealing eyes fixed on his face; then, with despair and gloom on hers, turned and walked away, soon lost in the steep descent of the downward path.

"Let me go and speak to her," I asked Sir Burleigh, grieved for her.

"No," said he, "'twould only do harm. Kilmarnock, too—it is scarce credible—so handsome a girl. No, I cannot suffer you to speak to her."

Kilmarnock had walked away. We arose from our seat somewhat cramped by long-sitting, and before going paused to take in once more the brilliant scene, so soft, yet cold, in its magnificence. A pause, lengthened purposely by Sir Burleigh, as though he feared we might overtake the girl—yet our path lay in another direction, and pursuing it we met with no interruption on our homeward road, reaching our lodging in peace.

In the grey and drizzle of the next day, the moonlight incident we had witnessed shrank to commonplace. Sir Burleigh, in alluding to it, did not blame Kilmarnock; to myself, I called him a cold-hearted profligate, but offered no opinion aloud. Of what use discussing the wickedness of a city, or passing judgment on Sergius for being no better than others? Yet was I grieved.

I had thought him juster and more merciful than last night showed him. Believing that I knew something of human nature, I was yet filled with amaze that neither beauty nor constancy could avail to retain love. What more lovely than that face—pale, despairing, lit up by the white moon-rays?

Meditating on this revelation, I scarce missed Sir Burleigh on his departure for Leith, where he would be till late at night, but contented myself with looking forward to another late ramble, free from any more disclosures of a city's miseries. I was not anxious to see at present any of our late company, and charged Sir Burleigh not to invite them to our quiet lodgings.

"That is impossible," said he. "'Twas Kilmarnock's man who retained them for us; and, Helen, if Sergius call, you must receive him as though entirely ignorant of last night's revelations. We were, in a manner, eavesdroppers—for what man, haunting St. Anthony's Chapel at midnight, could suspect an onlooker; besides, we have no right to pry into, or inquire of his affairs. So I charge you, be as cordial, as friendly to him as at the Manor. Sergius, too! To-night, mayhap, we shall run old Stellarig to earth up yonder, at the hermit's cave."

And he departed, rather amused than shocked at Sergius' delinquency.

But I resolved, apart, not to be as kind or as cordial as at the Manor, should he come. He had talked bitterly of Stuart's Islamism, and was worse himself.

Knitting ill thoughts of Kilmarnock into my work, and thinking of his apparent openness and frankness, I had not been two hours alone when Jessie put her flaxen head in at the door, demanding brusquely, "Was it my will to see a callant who had called, demanding to see Mistress Bourley," as she pronounced our incognito title. "It's a chiel called M'Kil—" said she.

"It is I," said Kilmarnock, interrupting alike her message and my deliberation—and stepping in he held out his hand with so glad a smile of welcome that I was surprised into a momentary pleasure at his coming.

"Welcome to Edinbro'—to Scotland," said he, raising my hand to his lips—those cold, cruel lips which but a few hours before had half jested at another's misery. "Why," said he, seating himself opposite me, while his deep, eloquent eyes spoke a thousand welcomes, "why are we all exiles at Stellarig? Are you so determined to first see Auld Reekie?"

"I have seen him," said I, thinking he referred to the Laird.

Kilmarnock laughed.

"It is an appropriate name, truly, but robbed from our city here."

I did not reply. A terrible embarrassment crept over me. I felt the indignant colour mount to my very brow at the glad greeting, and the pleasure his eyes expressed, after last night. Were all men as wicked as this man? I asked myself—then, conscious of the futility of anger which could not be expressed, I tried to frame some commonplace phrase or speech, asking at length after Lord Lovat's health.

"Lovat!" said he, in slow and puzzled accents, "he is, I believe, very well. He is staying with the Laird, who is his cousin."

Again there was silence. My eyes dropped before his, in which amazement and anger began to appear. He could not disguise from himself that his presence was painful to me, nor I, strive as I might, totally conceal that it was so. My friendship for him was too strong, too sincere for his delinquencies to be matter of indifference.

"Helen," said he at length, in a pleading tone, "why do you receive an old friend thus? Your eyes express anger and aversion—you can

scarce bring yourself to speak to me. What have I done? To another woman I would leave her unjust thoughts. Your harshness cuts me to the heart."

"I am sorry," I faltered, moved by the humbleness of his tone. "I am truly sorry to be harsh, but I am not, I think, unjust, since you have incurred harshness."

"Why?" said he. "That the lowest criminal may ask, and the highest judge must answer. Why?—for what crime or error? I am conscious of none."

"Sir," said I, recovering somewhat, "I am not your judge, nor are you, as it is counted, a criminal. Sergius," I continued, breaking in on my formal speech with a rush of emotion and anger mingled, "it is painful for me to believe you cruel and base, yet, harsh as it may sound, it is so. Go! I have no right to speak to you at all, it is true—yet I cannot forget how—how differently I thought of you."

Tears fell from my eyes as I thus spoke. Sergius had been no common friend to me, and in assuming this severity I felt miserable.

"That will not serve," said he. "I appeal to your justice. Tell me in what I am cruel or base, so vague and general a charge cannot condemn me. Helen," he went on, with a

humility more disarming from so proud and stern a man than any anger, "tell me in a word, that I may be out of this misery."

Sir Burleigh's order to receive him as usual had come to this. Yet what right had I to set up a censorship? I must be silent, or utter some conventional falsehood. Yet against that keen intellect falsehood would not avail. He would sift and repel it with scorn, retorting upon me the baseness of my accusation. At length I said simply, "Truth is best. When I say that we were on Arthur's Seat at St. Anthony's Chapel last night, and saw you there, it will surely be enough reason why I can no longer entertain a friendly regard for you. That unhappy girl, whom you so scornfully sent away, is she to have no helper? I were a devil if, after witnessing her grief, I countenanced you."

"Ailsie!" said he. "Did you indeed see her? Your compassion is natural, but, believe me, entirely wasted. She is a city outcast; and, had he been near, would have as closely pursued Sir Burleigh as myself. She is but half-witted, and, though beautiful, completely hardened, having many times been taken into respectable homes, always to escape and return to her old life." He rose and rang the bell. Jessie appeared. "Tell this lady," said he, "who that girl is

that haunts Arthur's Seat—I mean Ailsie Fraser."

"I!" said Jessie, flushing indignantly. "I'll tak nae such callet's name on my tongue. Ance my ain mither took her in, an' was kin to her as to her ain bairns, but she rins awa frae decent folk, and follys a' the gallants o' the town, claiming them as troth-plight to her. She has been in Tollbooth many a ance, but her beauty buys aff judgment, or she wad e'en be there the noo. She is the werst wicked grizzie in Edinbro', an noo fit to be named in a leddy's hearin'. Did ye see her last night, mem?" she added, to me.

"Yes," said I, stunned and ashamed. "Go now."

Still muttering against her, Jessie went. Kilmarnock's face cleared. Mine I hid in my hands, like a foolish, chidden child. I could not look upon him. How had I dared speak so to him?

"Forgive me!" I said at length, humbly, holding out both my hands. "I do not deserve it—yet you will. Oh! Sergius, what will you think of me? Yet how, believing her, could I keep silence? It seemed so cruel, so unjust of you."

"You," said he, "inconsequently acted like

an angel, as you are, in taking the part of the oppressed; but," he continued, with a grieved aspect, "I thought you juster, Helen, to me!"

At this deserved rebuke my head bowed low. I tried, I murmured, "I am very sorry; again forgive me!"

A sombre fire was in his eyes when, at length, I raised mine to them. He did not offer to relinquish my hands.

"I am your friend," said he at length, simply, "and ten thousand injuries, could you inflict them, were all forgiven for one word of pleading; put away from you all idea of my anger."

"You are always good to me," said I, withdrawing my hands, "no one else would so forgive folly and injustice."

"No one," said he, bitterly, "can ever feel for you as I feel; yet I may not even speak."

"As a statesman you may," I laughed. "You have yet told me none of your new moves."

"We are still waiting on France," said he, "but have yet more hope in the clans of late. The Prince, Lovat and I have been to the Highlands—— Helen," he broke off, with a deep sigh, "why do you keep me at statesman? I am your friend. Is this coldness and distance always to be my portion? If you knew how incessantly I think of you, mere justice would

prompt some return of interest; compassion, even, were sweet from you."

These guarded words but ill accorded with the passionate pleading of his eyes. I felt very unhappy that these illusory hopes still held sway in his mind, having a sincere affection for him, and being desirous of his peace and happiness, yet resolved against fostering them.

"If I keep you at statesman," said I, "it is your trade, and straying from it will not help you. Ought you not now to be at Leith, with Sir Burleigh and Stellarig?"

"We are not hucksters," said he, "nor tied to our stall. There is a meeting to-night. Would to God I were not pledged to help on the man I hate above all other men!" he muttered aside.

Then ensued an embarrassing silence, embarrassing at least to me. Sergius seemed content to gaze, as my bright knitting-pins flashed in their rapid movements. By what beam of thought I know not, suddenly flashed on me a knowledge of ignorance. It may have been that I noted how much power, determination, and intellect was in Kilmarnock's face, so near to me.

"You are Apostolic," I said, leaving my knitting for a moment, "and I have only just found it out."

Sergius laughed, inquiring, "As how?"

"As condescending to men of low estate. Truly comparing your vast experience, your talent, your genius, with my ignorance, I cannot help feeling how good you are to me, how forbearing. I tell you this now, lest it might seem to you sometimes I was a presumptuous wretch—a character I should abhor; lest you should think the wide gulf between us had never occurred to me, and I undervalued what I most humbly appreciate and admire."

"What lovely eyes you have!" said he, "and how sincere you are in endeavouring to comfort me. I am afraid I do not feel quite Apostolic, unless it be like that Pope who regretted that the Apostles would end with himself."

"Who was he?" I asked, endeavouring in vain to remember.

"He was me," said Kilmarnock, "and you are the queen."

"Was there a queen in it?" I asked. "Tell me the whole story—is it history?"

"History and fact, Helen, and history repeats itself—the whole story is too long. For whom are you knitting?"

"For you, if you will have them. There, I am now Wolsey offering his palace to Henry VIII., when he asked who he was building it for."

"I will have them, with gratitude, Helen, but not to wear—how could I trample underfoot what those sweet hands have worked?"

"Don't be too sure," said I laughing, "Sir Burleigh does. I wove socks also for Verney Clifford, Colonel Blount, and my uncle and cousin. So now own I am some use in the world. Feel the beautiful fineness and softness of my knitting; you could walk miles on these without feeling a rough road. I cannot do much—but I can knit."

"Like the Parcæ," said he, "men's fates into the woof of your work."

"How historical and classic, and altogether grand you are this morning," said I. "You are no longer Sergius, but a great statesman—I wish you would stop!"

"On or off the *pièdouche* you have erected for me?"

"Off," said I, "I only wanted to see how it suited; now I must have the proper Sergius again. I have held the golden bowl of appreciation, and poured the sparkling waters of truth over your hands. Now that due homage is rendered, Simon Stylites must come off his column at risk of a shower of stones."

"I will pardon your mixed metaphor," said he, "on one condition."

"That I knit double heels to your socks?"

"Helen," said he, sullenly, "you owe me some amends."

"Sergius," said I, "the good example of the lady in the poem weighs with me, who paid her debts but once. What do I owe you?"

"To pay your statesman once!" he answered, as he rose to take leave.

Reflecting that he had been harshly used, I did not refuse the kiss he begged so earnestly, for pity for him pleaded on his side.

"Stuart is mad!" said Sir Burleigh, coming in to luncheon, "and Stellarig is madder. I have escaped with my life from a hornet's nest down there. The only sane one, Sergius, was away—no doubt arranging affairs with that pretty damsel we saw last night."

"He has been here, Sir Burleigh."

"Yes? Why did you not ask him to luncheon?"

"He was not inclined to stay, sir. He says there is to-night a meeting at Leith."

"Umph!" was the response. "One would have thought, after the Manor, his visit would not be one of mere ceremony. Lovat asked leave to pay his respects. His master is sick and sullen—cold caught in the Highland mists. He desired respectful compliments to you. Stellarig rather repents his inhospitality, and was showing me

to-day a habitable set of rooms, habitable, that is, if large fires are kept up in them. For my part you are, I think, better off here, except that I have the journey every day, which Casimir thinks dangerous, and likely to attract notice. Stellarig tells me he was very angry that he had not arranged for our staying there, and vowed that if his friends were not made welcome, he himself would go."

"I will stay here," said I, with a shudder. "I neither could nor would eat sheep's head, which you say is what they dine off."

"It is not quite poisonous," said Sir Burleigh reflectively, taking some more oysters and chablis; "the worst is, their d——d Scotch pride will not suffer to pay for a cook of one's own altogether."

Just then the man brought in a truffled turkey, and in carving it Sir Burleigh found fresh occasion to inveigh against a residence at Stellarig.

"I believe the lad's half starved," he exclaimed —meaning Stuart. "He is thin and pale, looks very unhappy."

"That should not make a man unhappy," I said scornfully, "and a soldier, too."

"I am no gourmet," said Sir Burleigh, "but I'll be d——d if a succession of Stellarig's

dinners would not make me miserable. He has no wine, and whiskey palls on the palate."

"No cellar?" said I, in astonishment, unable to image a laird's dwelling without.

"You don't know all the Manor's advantages yet," he said, good-humouredly. "Believe you turned up your handsome nose at it. Wait till you see Stellarig."

"I intend never to see it, sir."

"I am afraid we must, my dear, even if we be half starved—'tis but for a few weeks."

"It is all very well to make light of it," I said, "after a good luncheon; but I really do not see why we should be poisoned, to save Stellarig's pride, he is a most horrid old man. I believe he likes haggis—he looks wicked enough."

"Well," said Sir Burleigh, as, the dishes removed, he prepared for a nap, "I will, be sure, make the best terms I can."

"I will have a nap too, sir; the thought that this is our last good dinner makes me sorrowful."

I sat on the arm of his chair, securing myself on my narrow perch with an arm round his neck—and, my head on his shoulder, we both dozed like two falcons on a perch,—my last waking memory being that he smiled at this petulance.

A sound like distant music, mingling with my dreams, seemed to come nearer and nearer, rousing me at length to the knowledge that there were visitors. I opened my eyes. Stuart was there, and Lovat. I stood up, silently awaiting their greeting, still rather sleepy. Lovat approached, smiling.

"Allow me, Lady Clifford, to welcome you to Edinbro'—to Scotland."

"Lovat speaks for both," said Stuart, bowing low, and continuing his conversation with Sir Burleigh.

Lovat and I drew chairs to the window, and began animated talk of Edinbro', of our journey hither, of our last night's excursion to the chapel.

"That, then," said he, "gave us the delightful privilege of seeing Lady Clifford asleep. We could not, truly, allow Sir Burleigh to awaken you on our account. I wonder," he went on, speculatively, "where the soul goes to when we sleep—it must go away for the time, do you not think so?"

"Yes," said I, "but I wish it would come back to us better—with some tinct of Paradise in it."

"It may not go to Paradise," he said, so briskly that I could but laugh; he laughed too.

"We are all charmed that you have come," said he, "except, perhaps, my amiable cousin, the Laird. To him, a lady and a hobgoblin are about equal in value and merit as inmates of Stellarig; but we consult him only in form—he is a mere fussy cypher."

"But," I objected, "as host, his wishes must have a certain weight and importance."

"None at all," said Lovat. "It is a speculation on his part, and a mighty good and safe one; he knows we are bound to succeed, and has ratted from Hanover. I have him, however, fast, so if Sir Burleigh will come to Stellarig, do not let the Laird be a hinderance. It is by no means a bad sort of place, and we are its masters—leased it from him for future barracks, on such conditions that if we fail his head is forfeited. That nice head," he smiled, "in its flaxen wig."

All the little intersecting wrinkles round his eyes creased up with anticipatory pleasure at the thought of Stellarig losing his head if they were worsted. I promised to think over coming, and when, soon after, they took their leave in the gloaming, to walk back to Leith, was conscious this half-promise would be considered a pledge to come to Stellarig without consulting the prejudices of its master.

After coffee, when the city lights came out by

tens of thousands, and the toilers were all a-hurry to get to their homes, we started for our walk, enjoying it no less than the last night. Here we had all the bustle and excitement of a great city, instead of the placid silence of the Clifford woods—people jostling and elbowing, soldiers shouting for Hanover, students defiantly singing Jacobite ditties, grave citizens plodding on neutral, waiting for the turn of events, their loyalty to Hanover but a greatcoat, to be cast off when Stuart's sun should shine. I did not now regret coming, nor marvel that men should like to be in the midst of the turmoil of a great political agitation, instead of quietly abiding in peace at home.

Sir Burleigh was satisfied and happy, convinced that his Stuart idol was on the road to almost immediate success. We went to and walked round Holyrood—it was in silence and darkness, guarded by grim sentries.

"Soon," said Sir Burleigh, "those empty halls will be full of life, light, and rejoicing. It is, Helen, like waiting for a sunrise in a dark dawn —all the shadows of the present will be gone then."

"God grant it," I thought, not all imbued with his firm faith, though impressed by the intense, half-secret Jacobite spirit pervading the Scottish

capital. To my mind the people lay like a lion crouched but not caged, awaiting only a favourable moment for a spring—a little awed and dazed by the material means used for its subjection, yet not sufficiently so for the safety of its would-be subduer. I did not reckon myself a Jacobite, yet I hated Hanover, for the coarse and cruel measures adopted in its German brutality against the fallen Stuarts, and fervently hoped no Hanover race would ever reign in the isles to degrade them.

The next day being what the Scotch invariably call the Sabbath—like Jews—I induced Jessie to forego her usual kirk, and accompany me to the Greyfriars Church in the Grassmarket—a very old building, remarkable for having had its spire destroyed by lightning near twenty years back. And there lay the blackened stones a-heap and scattered, without an attempt at rebuilding. We were early, and Jessie having a cousin to meet, left me—not ill-pleased to be rid of her—in a quiet corner, from which I watched the slow assembling of the worshippers. They were not very numerous, yet seemed grave citizens. I judged many of them to be Jacobites, why I don't know, except that I felt comfortable in my corner, which I could not have been, I think, amongst Hanoverians—more, perhaps, that the

men looked stern and preoccupied, without the relaxation of care Sunday brings to well-to-do folk. And the minister, when he entered and invited them all to pray, glanced around in search of strangers. All stood as he offered up a prayer for all Christian princes, whatsoever their estate. This, though veiled in so general an expression, to me seemed an allusion to Stuart —for the estate of the Hanover hog was all too good for his deserts. For his text the preacher took "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one."

His discourse was hesitating, stammering, and obscure, but for the Jacobite clew. He pointed, he said, to no material weapon, but the sword of the Spirit. Yet the attentive and stern faces of the men hardened as he alluded to the Jews being placed for their sins under the rule of foreign princes, and of their repentance and enfranchisement.

I listened with awakening enthusiasm, for he was eloquent, though purposely elaborating arguments that could, I felt, have been thundered forth with the directness and force of cannon shot. So also his other hearers seemed to interpret him. There was not one, man or woman, who lost a word of the veiled allusion and striking metaphor.

The psalmody was very dreary, and the whole service so long that on my return Sir Burleigh chid me for alarming him by so long an absence.

I told him of the sermon, and its marked effect on the people, which pleased him.

"Such," said he, "is the spirit of thousands and tens of thousands. I believe that were the lad to ride through Edinbro' to-morrow the whole city would rise to meet and greet him. He counts too much on France and material aid. It is the loyal spirit of a people that is a king's power and bulwark."

"He has," said I, who believed in big cannon and regiments of soldiers, "good advisers in France—and here, in Lovat and Sergius and you, sir—and must therefore be sure act wisely, even if he wait."

"Kilmarnock, I am sure, counsels him for the best," he rejoined, "but he does it in so harsh and cold a style—a style conveying the impression of Ahithophel before he hanged himself, disdaining to live with fools who could reject his advice. In point of fact Sergius puzzles me. Though so close a friend to the cause, and having made costly sacrifices for it, he is, or seems, hostile to his master. They are on very precarious and indifferent terms, and they were sworn comrades not so very long since."

"The fact of the matter is," he continued ruminating, "they are all starved, and we had better go and live amongst them, and I will take my own cook, a Frenchman I know of. More Christian fare will drive away their heathenish Scotch inter-feuds, and you may come without fear of oatmeal soup or haggis."

"I will come," I agreed, yawning, "though it sounds rather dreary, my kist is there all this time; and, now sir, I will tell you something—forgive me beforehand, trust me, or no pardon—I brought away a Titian from the picture-gallery."

"Is that all?"

"No, I brought several. I could not part with them. I brought seven—all portraits."

"You are a magpie," said he indifferently, "but as they please you it is all right—Verney don't care for them."

So it was agreed that we should go the next day, walking over in the evening; and, accordingly, leaning on Sir Burleigh's arm, I carrying my knitting stuck in my plaid—housewife fashion—as though we went but to take a dish of tea with a friend or neighbour, we went. The mile and a half I was promised stretched to two, for Stellarig was in the remote outskirts of the town of Leith, enclosed in high walls,

over which ivy hung in wet, unwholesome-looking masses. Seeing the place, I scarce wondered at the gloom within, as reported to me, wondering how the lively and sarcastic Lovat amused himself. I was soon put out of pain for him, for, at a signal, the gate opened—a little gate in the wall—and there, inside the porter's lodge, lit up by a bright fire, sat milord Lovat, talking to a little shrewd-looking, bald-headed man, who was perched on a high-joint stool, his thin legs drawn up, spider-fashion, from the ground.

"That is Stellarig's cousin," said Sir Burleigh laughing. "Lovat has enlisted him as an aid against dulness—he is an old gamester, too; has run through two or three d——d meagre Scotch fortunes. But here we are, Helen; mind the broken step—it is, I warn you, a ruinous old barracks."

"I see, sir; I am safely landed."

We were now in a dark hall, with corridors stretching from it—long aisles of gloom. I started when Kilmarnock's servant, who had been with us at our lodgings, came up noiselessly in the dusk.

"I will conduct you," said he, in a soft, suave voice, "to the Laird," and gliding before us, he threw open the door of a large empty-looking room, in which was a fire and a group of men

gathered round it, leaving us to announce ourselves.

There was a quick, forward movement from all, then a general and cordial welcome—even Stellarig joining in with a lengthy speech.

"Life," said Stuart, stopping him unceremoniously, "is too short for a Scotch welcome, sir;" and when the nowise discomfited Laird transferred it to Sir Burleigh, he laughed aside to me.

"You look shocked," he whispered, "at my brusqueness to him, but, be but here a few days, he will deave your ears off with set-speeches."

"Yet, sir, if he means well——"

"His good intentions comfort him," he laughed. "Now we shall be ourselves, Helen. It was horrible, work over, to have no soul to speak with."

Presently the unabashed Stellarig proposed, in hospitable words, to conduct us to our apartments; and accordingly, preceded by two servants carrying in the chest in which was our baggage, we went up a short flight of stairs, along a corridor, and again up more stairs to a bare, dismal, and barn-like set of three rooms, in which smoky fires struggled with the sea fog from open windows, and there seemed but scanty furniture.

Informing us that the smoke would choke us out if we shut the windows, as there was little doubt the chimneys were filled with starlings' nests of last year, he left us to perish, either with smoke or cold. Choosing the warmer mode, we shut out the sea wind, and choking and gasping, contrived to wash our hands, and then escape to purer air.

Dinner was soon announced, and Stuart and Sir Burleigh going in first, Stellarig offered me his hand, which did not look over clean, yet was I obliged to take it, and he assured me that, as a Southron, I should soon be in a gourmand's paradise.

"Not only," said he, "is there haggis, a dish peculiar to our favoured land, but, for a sweet, there will be sowans, an' oatmeal fritters wi' heath honey." In this he was not disappointed, but we had, as well, soup, salmon, and red deer haunch, which was much more to our taste, and making an excellent but somewhat silent dinner, for all seemed grave and preoccupied. I, presently after dinner, retired to our own rooms, to try if I could not, unobtrusively, render them more habitable. To my pleasure I found that the smoke had cleared away, the fires now burnt brightly. In their cheerful glow and warmth I stood considering with how good a grace I could

manage the hanging of pictures on the morrow, when a tap came to the door. It was the Laird. Being bidden he entered, at once relieving me of my perplexity.

"Sir Bourly tells me, milady, that intending a long stay in Edinbro' ye brought some paintings, and such like. Now to my mind such are idolatrous, which is why Stellarig is free from them; but after this testimony, I am clear of any guilt if you think fit to adorn your rooms with them."

"Thank you," said I, "it has been puzzling me how I could ask your leave, sir."

"My leave," said he, sourly, "is soon had—for if I object, it is dispensed with."

"I trust not," said I, bringing him a chair to the fire, and listening patiently to a long series of complaints of his intractable and overbearing guests.

"You are a sensible lass," said he, when he had exhausted his grievances, "and I was but an auld fule to put back yere comin' here—but that is a Stellarig motto, 'Duty first, pleasure after.' I thought maybe the chiels here wad be too much thinkin' o' ye, sae fair as ye are."

"Am I fair?" said I, smiling at having gathered this fig from a thistle, "but you see, sir, all here are old friends of ours, and used to me—they do not regard me much."

Stellarig was staring silently at me during this speech, then said suddenly:

"I like you, Lady Clifford; there is a smack of Scotch in your tongue—ye give the long roll to your R's, and the braid Border A's, which are next best to Scots English."

"I was brought up with Scotch folk," said I, "but I have not the Gaelic."

"Ye should hear the Prince speak it with me," said Stellarig proudly. "It is like twa pibrochs whistling on a hill-side. He is true Highland—hasty speech an' gude heart."

"I should like hear it," I averred, with a slight yawn at the dismal prospect I could not suppress. Whereupon, promising me that pleasure next day, my host took his leave with some cordiality, and after knitting and thinking for a while, I retired to the bedroom, and looked out over the garden at the distant sea, silvered by moonlight, vast and restless, its tumultuous waves rolling in, tossing up and down the fleet of anchored fishing boats. Such, thought I, are our lives—moved by every wave of thought, of emotion, yet anchored in the eternal and immutable. With which profound reflection, and a passing smile at the poor opinion the Laird seemed to entertain of his guests' wisdom, I disrobed and crept into bed. It was neither

stately, like the beds at the Manor, comfortable, nor specially clean—good enough, I reflected, as I dressed in the morning, for the soldiers, who are to be its future occupants, but——

"Helen," said Sir Burleigh, who had come to bed very late, sleepily opening his eyes, "what are you getting up so d——d early for?"

"It is eight o'clock, sir."

"That is no reason," said he, dozing off again. And to him it seemed none, for he did not show till ten.

Meanwhile I had coaxed Stellarig, whom I met wandering about, and who, I found, habitually rose at six, to take me down to the sea—had bought a fisher-damsel's holiday dress of blue striped homespun, at a high price, and donned it, with its pinned-back skirts and buckled shoes, to appear in at breakfast.

Sir Burleigh seemed vexed at the whim, and privately forbade my wearing it again. "For," said he, "granted you have a pretty foot and ankle, you need not it should show like a French dancer."

The rest, including Stellarig, liked the dress.

It was not here as at the Manor. So many and such differing visitors there were, all intent on business; so many meetings that I could not be included in, that I began to find statecraft

a dull trade, whereas before I thought it lively and pleasant enough when I was secretary.

Wandering about the large neglected grounds, or standing at night on a mound from which the harbour and village could be seen, was my only resource of amusement.

"The iron pressure of imperative work is upon us all," said Kilmarnock to me, "but so many of our agents are to be despatched this week that there will be a temporary lull of a day or two soon. Everything is prospering, and all for him," he added bitterly. "God knows what my share will be. I am little inclined to look for honours or emoluments from him. My honour is pledged in the cause—for a time my whole heart was in it, now it is working for a man I hate—yet I must go on as though all were smooth."

"You are unjust," I sighed, "he has not forfeited your friendship by any fault, and it is my dearest wish to see you friends again as of old."

"For that," said he, "you must blot out the past —blot out his cruelty to you, for which I first learned dislike of him. I can never be his friend again, but his servant I both can and must be while life holds, or at least until he can, in assured success, do without my aid."

"That will be never, Sergius. Can we do

without our right hand? Forgive him in all he has offended you—I have had much to forgive. It is useless to disguise that he has serious faults, but so have we all; and of what use is this petty *vendetta*—this planting of bitter weeds in our memory against those we love? Should they not rather be uprooted resolutely and scattered? It is not manly nor noble to brood over supposed wrongs, without at least giving your fancied adversary the chance of clearing himself. I am sure your alienation must be grievous to him."

"My alienation!" said he, with a bitter downward curve of the lip, "Mine! I beg your pardon, Lady Clifford, but we were better off this topic. You would never understand how one man can wound another—a thousand looks, tones, words, which must be unremarked by an onlooker, find, like arrows, their target in one's heart and memory."

In all this, as I knew, Kilmarnock deceived himself. It was he who created the differences, and day by day widened them. Stuart, never amenable to injustice, naturally resented his haughty, cold, and overbearing demeanour; yet even amidst the irritation with which these possessed him, he would strive after peace with his intractable counsellor—sometimes wistfully

watching him, as one does a dear friend who is in an angry mood, which we hope to exorcise by patience and long-suffering. Nothing softened or affected Sergius; his heart was crowded by an unreasoning jealousy, cruel as fate, blind as love.

The leisure days followed the hurry of a week past, and, pursuant to an extorted promise, I went with Stellarig and Kilmarnock a-fishing. With an old boatman to manage the sail, and the sea smooth, it was a pleasant release from the irksomeness of the lonely house and dismal garden. The sun shone brightly, the little waves danced in shoreward. Sergius, full of happiness and content, was the old, pleasant, trusty friend—we were all happy, even Stellarig, herring catching and discoursing to his heart's content with the fisherman, who was bound to listen respectfully, seemed to enjoy it We had told no one but Sir Burleigh of our going, and he, departing for Edinburgh, made no objection as it was Sergius.

We had but been out three hours, when Stellarig, looking shoreward, said suddenly:

"See, the flag is lowered, we are wanted within."

Kilmarnock looked anxious.

"It must be something sudden," he muttered,

commanding the boatman to run in with all speed. "I hope to God," he said, in agitation, "that this idle jaunt may not cost us dear!" and scarce had the boat's keel touched the sand than he sprang ashore, letting himself in by a gate which overlooked the sea.

We waited awhile, collecting our belongings, and, followed by the fisherman with his creel, in which were some fifty herrings, went in by the lodge gate, and so leisurely up to the house.

What the business was which summoned Kilmarnock did not transpire. We saw him, as we passed the open door of the sitting room, in conversation with Stuart; his face was darkly flushed, but the tones of both were low and concentrated, no stray word rewarded our casual listening as we lingered past—Stellarig the most curious of the two—I concluding it was some recently arrived message or dispatch, perhaps from France, brought in by a fishing boat, as they sometimes were.

"Let us," said I, to the Laird, "ding up some nails for my pictures, and so end the afternoon in company."

He laughed, not averse to being made useful; and, flattered by any mortal under his roof desiring his company, he fetched hammer and nails, and, standing wigless on a table, sent the

nails gallantly home with resounding blows of the hammer.

Three of the melancholy Titians were placed, and we were considering a place for the fourth, when, with the slightest possible knock, Stuart walked in.

"Why," said he, with forced gaiety, "we thought, Stellarig, you had a contract for coffin-building, so many nails you have driven this last hour—but you have a hard taskmaster. I will relieve you, and trust I may be found as good a journeyman." Mopping his brow, though the exertion he had made did not demand it, Stellarig leisurely resumed his wig, and, nothing loth, ambled off to see after his neglected fish. Stuart shut the door.

"Now," said he, with a dejected and melancholy air, "now that you have driven me to the brink of ruin, you will be satisfied. I was too happy before, too untroubled! Was I not too secure? It is well to be taught on how precarious a tenure your love is held."

"What do you mean," I asked, my hand in which I held several brass-headed nails beginning to tremble, which I noted in that the nails shook.

"Ask yourself," said he, harshly, "is it possible or likely I should keep on good terms

with Kilmarnock? yet parting from him is little less than ruin to me."

"You should not say that to me, sir, it is undeserved. I will return to the Manor to-night, I am miserable here—to know myself accused of fomenting strife is too much. It is an indignity no fisher girl would bear patiently, nor will I."

"A Clifford!" said he, in an indescribable tone, not coarse enough for sarcasm, quiet and self-contained, yet bitter and stinging as a scorpion's bite.

"Yes," said I, "a Rosamond Clifford; but it is not a woman who offers me the poisoned bowl, who whets the dagger for me. Sir, when you go, send Stellarig back."

I walked to the window and looked out. The sun was setting, leaving a pale, yellow glare on the darkening sea—a light, angry colour, cold, and embittering rather than brightening the scene.

When I turned I saw that Stuart was watching me, but dully, and with an oppressed, absent look on his face, which was pale, though all anger seemed to have died out of it.

Oppressed with care and business,and probably with a headache, I thought pityingly, has quarrelled with Sergius about nothing,and thinks

I am in fault because he chose to do so. I will not own myself to blame, or appear as a fomenter of strife. Why need he have summoned us in merely for this, to show martyr-fashion, and spoil Sergius' fishing? He shall speak first—and immediately spoke first myself.

"I hope you have no ill news, sir?"

"No further than I have told you," he said sternly. "That is ill news enough, for me at any rate—to you it is perhaps amusement."

"Has ever any grievance of yours amused me, that you make such a charge? Do I ever even retort your injustice to me? Am I bound by your acts? Have I quarrelled with Kilmarnock?"

"Stop!" said he. "Leave Kilmarnock out. I have heard your perfections from him, but by —— if you think I will listen to his praise from you, you are mistaken. Is it not enough that on every occasion he plans, contrives, evades, in order to be with you?—that you were waited on by him at Margaret Street on arrival, that you go boating with him here? I have suffered it thus far, but my friend shall have equal justice with you. Give him up or give up me—once for all."

"I hate alternatives," said I, "they are so exceedingly stupid. If I agreed to either I should be

unjust, and belie myself—I cannot nor will give you up, nor I will not nor can cease to be friends with Sergius without a cause."

"Are not my wishes a cause, Helen?"

"In everything wise and just—yes."

"Where is the folly or injustice of commanding you to forsake Sergius?"

"The commanding an impossibility—I cannot forsake what I have not. Sergius is my friend, and that is all—and your friend," I added, with some misgiving.

"I did not think," he said bitterly, "that in all the world there existed so bold and hardened a woman. You *know* Kilmarnock has long ceased to be my friend at heart—you know best why—and you calmly propose that this state of things shall continue, till your mind is made up. To Kilmarnock you incline for his talent—perhaps I am to be congratulated that so clever a woman ever condescended to so dull a mind as mine. Sir Burleigh said well on our first meeting that you were all intellect—he forgot to add that you were entirely heartless, nor, had he, should I then have believed him."

"Nor do you now, sir; own that you are splenetic and captious, and I will forgive you."

Standing behind his chair, holding his head back at a break-neck angle, he first spluttered

with indignation, then, finding that unavailing, laughed, confessing to headache, captiousness, and irritability—which I knew that he suffered from even more than from doubt of me or suspicion of Kilmarnock.

"Now," said I, "own that quarrelling is the resource of savages—that in a splenetic mood a man may knock on the head or scalp a certain number of his fellows, and, finding relief from it, ascribes it to their death, when the change of thought, the exercise, the active exertion, is the true medicine to his diseased mind. I have discovered here a disused tennis-court; could we not, you and Sergius, Lovat and Sir Burleigh, play, and I sit, like the Queen of Beauty, and look on, with Stellarig for courtier? It will be better than the interchangeable dialogue of four words kept up now by you two, of 'Give me the dagger!' You both forget that respect for yourselves, that kindness to me which your present estrangement will not suffer you to show or feel. If this is the only result of my Leith visit, I were better away. I came against my better judgment, but I came neither to foster illusions in Kilmarnock, nor submit to them in you!"

"I have no illusions with regard to you now," he said, resuming his bitter and sullen tone.

"When I first saw you, as a beautiful country girl, how could I tell that at heart you were a subtle schemer, cold, ambitious, talented, and heartless?"

"A very siren, sir; but don't forget that it was art chiefly used to save your life."

"And your own honour," said he, "to the world—your little world. You loved me, yet you ruthlessly sacrificed me to Sir Burleigh, and still more, sacrificed him to your safety. What remains, but that, tiring of such easy dupes, Kilmarnock, the ablest man in Scotland, should more satisfy your intellectual craving than either—on my soul I pity him should one of greater talent appear!"

"He has appeared," said I. "He is here; Rembrandt might envy the lurid, concentrated light he throws on the portraits of his friends, and the man who advised, 'Go to Milton for devils,' had not benefited by *your* descriptive power."

"Devil!"

"Very well, sir; after this, the honest stupidity of one who believes me an angel, or calls me so, though it is somewhat a feathery comparison, will be welcome."

"Any man who calls you an angel, I will see that my dirk shall give him at least a chance of

improving in his knowledge of them as they are!"

"Why? what is it to you if the counterfeit content them?"

Then, repenting my angry, defiant spirit, I withdrew to the window, looking out on the sea again. It was now dark, with endless small sullen waves, only far away the light of the unrisen moon showing palely on the water, scarce perceptible. I knew myself cruelly used, and self-pity and pride hardened me to believing, without any cause. The summons to dinner startled us both. Stuart withdrew, still angry and sullen, without other words. I arranged my hair, a little ruffled by the sea winds, and went downstairs. Sir Burleigh had not returned; Kilmarnock was there, looking gravely unhappy.

"I hope," I inquired, "that our recall, or rather our trip, had no serious consequence?"

"Our recall," said he, "was due to a dispatch from France, but only of slight importance; relatively, of course, everything is important. It is all answered and arranged now."

"Will you sit by me at dinner?" I asked.

He agreed. I noticed that he had some tar on his hand, a souvenir of our boating.

"That," he explained, "soap will not affect at all."

"Ask Stellarig," I suggested, "as a fisher, he will know."

"Grease," said Stellarig curtly, "will fetch it off. Why, mon, hae ye lived all these years and not ken that?"

"It is curious," I commented. "This chemistry of common things comes to some by intuition. What chemists the Medici would have made! Their name is, I know, Doctor, but their poisoning belongs to the first trade."

"By right, yes; but is often usurped and successfully practised by the others. I don't know why," Sergius went on, "but I always imaged poisoners as having very glittering bright eyes—eyes which would glitter in spite of them. When I meet a woman with eyes like that I avoid her."

"How cruel!" I laughed. "She may only wish to poison your mind against a rival—a quite pardonable wish."

He made no reply, seeming in too serious a mood for nonsense, and, Stuart and Lovat coming in, he crossed the room and joined them, leaving me to Stellarig, who began to growl to me confidentially about his cousin, and the eccentricities he indulged in.

"He is that wee bauld mon at the porter's lodge," said he, "perhaps you have remarked him. He is good eneuch to sit wi' the best in the land, yet I canna expect my guests to submit to a coatless and wigless auld fule sitting wi' them, an', as he will not pit on a wig, there he abides alane. I have taken him some caller herrin's, an' could we see him, I dare be sworn he is cooking them in a grill over the fire, as happy as a king. He has been a rich mon, too, an' as much a laird as mysel', but an he hadna pairted for play wi' a' his lands an' biggins, an' come, Prodigal-like, to be to me as ane hired servant; though," he added grimly, "I pay him nought."

"If you have no objection," said I, "to afford me an introduction, I should like to make his acquaintance."

"Next time we go fishing," said Stellarig, "I'll bring him. He is a gude fisher, an's had his ain waters to fish in. It's wae sometimes to see him as he is, but that he is content. Ye may als, if it please ye, look in at the lodge, he is natral courteous to leddies, tho' he was never marriet."

Just then dinner was served. Sir Burleigh had returned, and the old-fashioned courtesy of Stellarig seated us together. This I was glad of, having no inclination to talk to the others, and

gladly escaping, dinner over, to the firelit solitude of our own rooms, which looked comfortable and habitable with the life-like portraits looking at me from the walls. Those faces were all old friends, always the same—silent, contemplative, and ever satisfied with me as I was. From the gliding figure of the girl who had so often come silently into their presence at the Manor, and wandered from end to end of the gallery, expecting their eyes to follow, was no difference apparent to them in the woman, graceful, beautiful, philosophic, who remained true to her old love of them, her old feeling of being well companioned so they were there. Through long usance this feeling had grown upon me almost to a reality. To me they were not mere pictures, but lovers and friends, who had existed for me in former days. Had we been separated I would have truly said, thinking of them, "My lovers and my friends have ye put far from me."

Knitting in the imperfect firelight, I was musing how the divinity of genius can console and correct the crudity of our material life. How little was there at Stellarig to make the mind amends for its prison-like solitude! Here I had my Court and my friends, who approved of me under any and in all circumstances.

Presently Sir Burleigh came in, bringing me coffee, standing in his towering height opposite me on the other side of the fire. Casuists cry that but one can be truly loved, yet I loved Sir Burleigh, and that truly. I worshipped his unfailing goodness to me, and would have gladly given my life to save him pain.

"You have some of your pictures hung," said he, with a smile. "You are a silent sort of little witch, and I believe, after all, enjoy—or sorrow—in a world of your own, apart from mere existences."

"Not apart from you," said I; "whatever elf-land I return to, if you are not there I shall die, you have been part of my life so long."

"You," said he, embracing me, "are part of heart—of my soul. To save you pain, disappointment, or regret, I would sacrifice all, and yet not be able to prove how I love you, Helen."

"You have proved it, sir, bringing me coffee." Though I jested, the tears were in my eyes. The beauty and sincerity of his love, though it could have no tenderer, perchance deserved a better recipient. From this, which I expressed, he dissented with an oath, saying he wanted no impossible angel, nor no fool, like Verney's wife—but only me, and that just as I was, neither better nor worse.

"You had better return with me," said he, "there is no more business to-night, and though we play cards, Sergius is there to amuse you; here is too lonely." So, returning with him to the bare and homely-looking sitting-room, I spied Sergius, sitting disconsolately away from the card-table, and beckoned him to come and share the solitude of the single neuk, whose wide, oaken, polished seats—in imitation of the more humble ones of a kitchen—reflected the glow of the fire, which flashed also on my knitting-pins.

"Why," said I, "do all statesmen off duty spend their leisure in your melancholy way? I thought they were a sort of spider, who spun webs as much for pleasure as use. Look at Lovat, he is always happy."

"So was Ulysses," sighed he, in a whisper, or almost one—so low a tone that none but I could hear.

"But you," said I, "have so long since succumbed to the sirens. How old is Lord Boyd?"

"I forget," said he indifferently, "as those wretched Greeks forgot honour, love of country, wives, children. It is all to me but a dream—there is, to me, but one reality, one voice, one presence, in the whole world."

"Is that the Laird's cousin, sir? I have been promised an introduction to him."

Kilmarnock laughed.

"You will, doubtless, be received by him grilling fish—his favourite employment. But, Helen, say something kind to me. I am truly wretched."

Wretched, indeed, he looked, yet what was his reading of something kind was not to be said, except at the risk of increasing his folly. I talked to him of the Manor, of our first meeting by moonlight at the farm—our thoughts and words strayed back to long past scenes, our voices grew low and earnest, intent on that half painful retrospection with which, standing on the heights of time, we look over the panoramic past as it passes in review before us. We were recalled to the present by the breaking up of the card-party and the serving of refreshment —frugal oatcake and whiskey and water—of which all partook, as 'twas provided solely by Stellarig, from whom the commissariat had been rather masterfully taken by the rest; in this none liked to seem to slight his provision, and to him, as host, 'twas the happiest hour of the twenty-four —for the Scotch are by nature so hospitable that, let them have but a crust, they would share it, for all that their somewhat cautious social temperament will not let them seem the generous-minded people they in reality are.

"These are real griddle cakes," said Lovat, "just as we have them in the Highlands."

"They are very good," said I, and having one slipped into my pocket, I stretched out my hand for another, just as Kilmarnock, unseeing—for he was busy talking—put his hand to the platter, catching, with a great start, my fingers instead of the cake, whereat the rest all laughed.

"A sweet meal," said the Laird, "taste it, milord."

Thus challenged, and nothing loth, he raised it to his lips, and instead of a mere kiss of courtesy, gave it so passionate a pressure that the rest, looking on, could not fail to remark it.

An instant's embarrassed silence succeeded, then all began to speak hastily, as by one consent. I felt both angry and unhappy, that for his own sake, as well as mine, so foolish a yielding to a trifling temptation had turned a jest to trouble and misery.

He alone seemed unconscious of having offended. His usual grave and quiet manner was replaced by an air of emotion, of pleasure; his sombre eyes were full of light; for him it would almost have seemed that we were alone. Unable to endure the scorching blush which had risen to my face on seeing the eyes of all fixed on Sergius in amazement, I walked away to the

fireplace. He followed. Lovat came forward opportunely, and to him, recovering somewhat, I talked, thankful for his good sense in taking off the embarrassment of this pernicious absurdity of Sergius, who now stood by silent, and apparently content, listening.

"Sergius," said Sir Burleigh, when we had retired, "is a coxcomb at heart, or else the Laird's whiskey inspired him to make a d——d fool of himself. That, however, is not my question. I shall demand to know how he dared so confuse and anger you."

"I am neither confused nor angry," I said, coldly, "and am convinced 'twas but a joke in very bad taste."

"By George! he did not seem to find the taste bad," replied Sir Burleigh, with a laugh at his own pleasantry, that emboldened me to affirm that whiskey was the sole cause of Sergius' offence, and argue against the annoyance 'twould cause me to have so silly a question revived.

"This time, then," said he, half angrily, "I will believe you—the next, my own eyes. I own I must think him affected by the whiskey, since he is too much your friend to desire to annoy you, and too much mine wilfully to anger me with such folly."

Very loth to defend him, yet fearing to speak

my mind, I was silent, and sleep, like a wave, swept away from all memories, more than the remembrance of it as a pleasantry of the grave statesman.

We were breakfasting in our own rooms next morning, when Stellarig, announcing himself only by a slight knock, walked in, and desired my leave, at my leisure, to speak to Sir Burleigh.

I withdrew as far as to the next room, thinking it but some political trifle he had to communicate, which was doubtless already known. Sir Burleigh 'twas evident thought so too, for he looked somewhat impatient at so formal an opening. Stellarig was fond of playing Sir Oracle.

"I didna think," he began, "that in a great contingency like the present, that ony pairt o' mankind—less fules or idiots—should so comport themselves as to call on thoughtfu', sensibu men o' years an' discretion to interfere in their doings. Yet, so it is sir, that either I or you must be up an' stirrin'; for, sir, there's dirks drawn about the bannocks o' yestreen, an' mebbe there's more to tell if I knew the end; but seein' them resolved in their deadly fuleness, I cam awa to acquant ye wi' it, an' see what ye can do to stop it."

"What is it you mean?" said Sir Burleigh, incredulously. "Surely, sir——"

"Surely, sir," interrupted Stellarig, "a fule born every day, granted; that two of them are in the old tennis-court now is certain; and as they don't use to tennis in shirt sleeves wi' drawn rapiers, it maun be a new ploy they're actin' or about to act. Certes they are earnest over it, for both hurried by me wi'out sae much as gude morrow, Laird, an' into the tennis-court."

"Who?" said Sir Burleigh, rising hurriedly, "speak plain, man!"

"Sergius," said he, "an' his maister. Were they as deadly earnest ower their wark the cause needna droop, or be sae gradual."

"Why did you not demand to know of it?" said Sir Burleigh, rising rather reluctantly—it was still early, and he disliked the chill sea air and chiller fog.

"I!" said Stellarig, "the man they regard as much as an auld corbie! They wad ha' thrust me aside, or dune worse, had I said them nay to ony fuleness they are bent on."

"D——n it!" said Sir Burleigh, "am I to get gout because they choose a bout at fencing to amuse them, or warm them to an appetite for breakfast? That it is anything else is impossible.

Sergius is not such a fool, even if such a thing could be; 'tis impossible, Laird."

"Atweel," said Stellarig, "the impossible often happens."

"Well, I'll go," said his guest unwillingly. Setting down his coffee-cup, and accompanied by Stellarig, he went.

I stole out behind them, catching sight in a mirror of a pale, horrified face. To me nothing that was rash or dangerous seemed impossible where Stuart was concerned. I blamed him bitterly as I threaded the damp garden paths, where the soaked and fallen leaves deadened the tramp of the men's footsteps who were in front of me, and let mine fall noiselessly. A branch of ivy hanging from a bough, swung aside by them, flung its dank dew into my face, a cold salute that made me shiver. The garden seemed larger and wilder than usual; all sorts of unnoticed paths and places sprang into prominence, as though to interpose unneeded delays to our arrival at the scene I dreaded. We at length reached the tennis-court. The gate leading to its inner door was locked, but the lock, pushed back by Stellarig with his large bladed pocket-knife, was easily opened, and still they went on, into the bricked passage which flanked it on one side, netted to keep in the

balls. The large court was empty. The numerals on the walls looked down, like Magian inscriptions in an enchanted hall, on to blankness—vacancy.

"There is the gallery at the end," whispered the Laird; and they hastily, half running now, as though scenting danger, traversed the passage—not once pausing or looking back.

I followed, framing no excuse for my presence, yet dreading its detection. The gallery at the end was a small, half-dark chamber, getting all its light from the court in front—meant only for spectators of the play, and provided with one bench which ran its whole length in front. On this sat Kilmarnock, pale and breathless, rapier in hand, bleeding from a wound in the left arm. Stuart, at a little distance, was regarding him with anger, yet not without anxiety—fury struggling with old friendship, new wrongs with past affection. The blood which came slowly and sullenly from his arm imaged Kilmarnock's mood. It seemed but a scratch.

"I ask but for a minute more," he said, "and then do your worst—for, by —— I mean to, as you have chosen to begin it."

"Why," said Stuart with a sort of catch in his voice, that in a woman would have been a

sob, "did you bring this about, Kil? Shall we not stop now?"

"Too late!" said the other, rising and confronting him, palely, the brown masses of his hair thrown back, his lips drawn and pale, his eyes hollow.

"Fighting without foils!" said Sir Burleigh, coming forward, "nay, how now, gentlemen? Sergius, this is treason. Sir, have you no better heart than to hurt your best friend? I hope it is but fencing? Yet we have work in hand should have kept this off."

"Sir Burleigh," said Stuart, "am I never to be free? Surely, as a gentleman, you will credit that this is not causeless?"

"Sergius," said Sir Burleigh, "you—aiming at the lad's life. You—who might be his father. It is like a nightmare, so hideously unreal it shows. How would you awake if either killed the other? For very shame you must kill yourself. It is murder, and no fair fight. Come away, my dear lad, Sergius will recover best alone."

"Go!" said Sergius, breaking his rapier. "Go—I will fight no more. I apologise. I own to being beaten—to being wrong. Go, sir! For God's sake, if you are generous, leave me now—at once!"

"Come on," said Sir Burleigh to Stuart, "he can do no more now than own to being in the wrong; the rest will be said after."

Stuart lingered. Pride urged him to stay—to wring to the utmost the reparation of humility—but his better nature, helped on by Sir Burleigh's influence, prevailed, and, accompanied by Stellarig, the three turned and left the court slowly, to its damp solitude, its half-lit vacancy. None saw me, drawn up in the deep shadow. Kilmarnock listened till the clang of the outer gate closing assured him of being alone.

I, too, had meant to steal, shadow-like, after them, from the shadows where my dark woollen gown had helped to conceal me; but staying to give them a long start, to so escape detection, when I at length moved my foot touched a tennis ball, which rolled noiselessly across the floor, beneath the bench, and past Kilmarnock. He started, and, turning round, peered into the dusk. I stood still, hoping he would attach no importance to the ball, or attribute it to those who had just gone. Then, as he sighed, my resolve to go veered round. "I cannot," thought I, "leave him thus, wounded and miserable, without a word," and came forward.

"Milord," said I, "this is fine work, for all accounts; had you no better to do than injure

your master?" standing in the midst of the room to deliver this exordium.

He did not answer; his eyes were fixed on me, an angry light in them.

"Always of him," said he. "I am assailed, wounded, reproached, and unhappy, yet he is free. Go to him, for God's sake! It is too much that you feel no pity for me."

"Do not say so." I drew nearer, reluctantly. His eyes wore now an appeal, an earnest wistfulness which moved me, irresistibly, to pity him. "You know I feel for you, yet you, yourself, owned you were wrong."

I drew yet nearer. His handkerchief, which he held to the scratch, was soaked with blood. I took it gently away, and replaced it with mine. Sergius shivered; his hand, grasping the back of the bench, contracted, till the old woodwork creaked with the force of its compression, though I had touched him very gently. I thought he was in pain, in agony, and smoothed back the damp clustering hair from his forehead.

"It is," said he—"it is pain—agony—but not of that kind you guess at. I saw you, broke my sword, humbled myself to him, would have sold my soul, as I have, to be alone; and your first plea is for him. Helen, you do not know

what my love for you is. No, 'tis useless, nor shall you go."

His uninjured arm held me; his eyes, blazing now like steady lightnings, held me too.

"Sergius," said I, "this is cruel. I do pity you, but 'tis not part of pity to suffer this."

"Oh! my dear," said he, daringly, "'tis part of heaven to me to hold you in my arms, though but for a second."

"Arm, arm, Achilles!" said I, jestingly, though with a tremor. "And, indeed, you are strong as Achilles. Now leave go, I must in to breakfast. Sir, I say I will go. Sergius, this is madness!"

"It is," said he, his slow and studied speech vibrating with passion, "a madness to live in were worth all reason can offer. I cannot let you go. My will is powerless. This is more to me than life, than honour. Helen, tell me you love me."

"You are mad," I repeated angrily, "but go I will." With both hands I tried to unclasp his arm.

"Stop," said he, "while I am quiet, moderate. You cannot guess at the devil possessing me. Is my ruin, dishonour nothing to you that you tempt me thus?"

"I!" thought I, in fear and amazement, lifting

awestruck and terrified eyes to his face, yet desisting from any movement.

"Thus should we be were we dead," he said. "You in my arms, death were not so bad. 'Tis this present anguish torments me. Why should I, who love you more than all, be discredited; nor will I be. Men by millions have lost all for love. I can suffer no longer."

"Sergius," said I, impatiently listening to the indistinct utterance of his voice, "what a wicked wretch you are to talk thus. I will acquaint Sir Burleigh if at once you do not let me go. I but meant to help you as a friend. Sir Burleigh shall call you to account for this. It is cruel, cruel!"

"I have counted the cost, Helen, in long days of pain, in sleepless nights. You love me a little—I will make you love me entirely. I will be your slave, your guard. I have wealth, position. All a woman desires of devotion, of love, shall be yours for ever."

"You have a wife," said I.

"A true wife is the woman one loves. A few words to a priest are not marriage. I love you, only you."

"Nor a few frantic words to a woman held by main force are not love, but an insult."

"Helen," said he, "spare me. If you but knew

how I have suffered, could but glance at how I feel."

"Dear," said I, "I am not angry. I am grieved for you. In good time, thank heaven! there is Stellarig coming. For your own sake leave me."

Slowly we heard the Laird's footsteps approach the outer gate, enter, close it, and come into the brick passage.

Slowly, like the unfolding of an anaconda, Kilmarnock's arm released me, and, with the incredible and almost diabolical cunning of men, he whispered: "I will keep him here while you escape." He reseated himself on the bench, while I, in the deep shadow, saw the Laird approach him.

"There's a good fellow," said Sergius, in his usual tone. "I thought myself forgot. Just hold this handkerchief to my shoulder while I rise." (Now is time to go.) "Stand to sir, and lend me your arm—no, moving is too painful—I will yet rest a few minutes."

"Dinna hurry," said Stellarig kindly, "belike ye feel weak?"

"As Achilles or Ajax!" thought I, hurrying down the long passage, and so out into the now sun-lit garden. After the cold and damp of the tennis-court, its freshness and brightness were infinitely reviving. I walked up and down

in the sunshine, and, at a turn of one of the walks, encountered the Laird's cousin. He was digging up worms for fishing bait. He rose from his stooping posture at sight of me, and stood, holding a long wriggling red worm in his fingers.

"Milady Clifford?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"A vera handsome young leddy, as reported."

"Thank you," said I, "but my reporters are too partial, I fear."

"Not at all so. Yet, mem, if I may say so, your lips are too red—like sealing-wax."

"'Tis that wretch, Sergius," thought I, brushing them resentfully, yet smiling at my odd critic, who, hatless and wigless, smiled too.

"Your husbandt, now, wad be that vera tall chiel, Sir Burleigh Clifford; or are ye the Viscount's lady?"

"I am Lady Burleigh!"

"Yet," said he, "tall as he is, 'tis said you look higher than him—ay, an' reason gude, for Prince Charlie is aebody's darlin'."

"Sir," said I, "poring over worms does not seem to elevate your charity to your neighbours."

"Why should it?" said he. "Hoots, lassie! dinna blush to own ye entreppit by his bonnie

blue een, glancin' as a hawk's; ye are na the only ane by mony, 'tis no lee to say."

"Where is your gown?" said I.

"Gown?" he repeated, puzzled. "Ou, ay. I am not a confessor, troth no. 'Twas Lovat told me a' this."

"And worse than this?" I inquired amused.

"No, no," said he. "Lovat is no meddlin' pye; he jist speaks as he finds, 'athout fear nor favour. He is a gude fisher-lad too, is Lovat."

"In troubled waters, I suppose, as now?"

"In any waters, lass. My cousin, the Laird, tells me you are a bit fond o' fishin'. A' weel, I will take you out on the firth to-morrow, if you care to come."

"I will come with pleasure—send me in word at what hour you intend to start."

"It rests wi' Kilmarnock to fix the hour. I agreed to go at his convenience; sae you maun ask him—als if he is agreeable to tak' ye—he is nae a leddie's mon. 'Twere weel if a' were as cauld an' carefu' o' their ways as he is; but it tak's all sorts to mak' a warld, an' compared to maist men, Sergius is a saint."

"Is he?" said I, proffering him a worm I had collected on a bit of stick. "Here is a fine worm—it is not like a saint, but," I muttered aside, "it is very like Sergius."

Going up to the house later on and entering our anteroom, I was surprised to hear Stellarig's voice in the sitting-room within. Sir Burleigh and Kilmarnock were also there. Sergius was seated, his face was very pale, his arm in a sling —he was listening, with downbent head, to Sir Burleigh, who, in concert with the Laird, was pouring forth a torrent of angry reproaches on his conduct in regard to Stuart.

"To think that you—you, should go afield to fight windmills, to take causeless offence at a hasty word, when you know that though he is hasty, he is generosity's self in reparation."

"Ay," said Stellarig complacently, "see how he miscaas me, yet whiles he will tell me, in Gaelic, he has no better friend, nor more faithfu' follower. Ay, here is mileddy, been gatherin' roses in the gairden."

"Don't go," said Sir Burleigh as Kilmarnock rose. "What we have had to say is ended, and you must subscribe to its justice. I shall say as much to Stuart. By —— I would not for the world have our friends know that there are divided counsels among us. I am going to him now. Come, Laird, you must give your word too. Plain speaking may prevent a repetition of it, or of any such folly. Sergius, you will await my return, I trust. Helen will write for you, if

you have aught of it to do, as well here as elsewhere."

With that they went, and the door closed, leaving two as embarrassed people as need be behind.

As the least guilty, I spoke first, asking with a half-smile, if I should write for him as his arm seemed hurt. Receiving no reply, I told him of my meeting with the Laird's cousin, of his invitation to go a-fishing, which, said I, seems to require your sanction or await your veto.

"Come, Sergius," said I, as he was still silent, "must I go on my knees and ask you to forgive yourself? I have forgiven you. Why should you be so tragic and uncomfortable? I will return to to the garden, by when we next meet this mood also will be outworn."

As he did not speak, a nervous dread crept over me. I felt as though he hated me, unjustly, in that I had witnessed the frenzy of his mind; the passion which, left to himself, he might have reined to subjection—witnessed the abasement of a lofty mind, the weakness of a strong heart, only to jest at it, to make it food for laughter, for satiric comment. Surely he might credit me with truer friendship for him than to fall off at one fault, though a grave one. As I looked from the window my eyes were misted with a

bitter dew—not tears, but anger at his injustice to me.

"That I never get," thought I bitterly, "justice. Even now he will be comparing me with some mincing city-dame or French demoiselle, who would have let him suffer torture rather than own to having forgiven him, as I have."

I searched out my knitting and sat down, in confused pain and anger, unknowing how to fairly apportion it. Silent as he was, should I have kept silence, I thought, to him? When I was suffering at the Manor, he was my faithful helper and friend. Why, then, should I see him in misery, and not aid him? We were not amidst a cloud of witnesses, and had it been so, the example is left to us of one whose sins, in that she loved much, were publicly forgiven.

"Sergius," said I, crossing to where he sat, my hands fluttering down like two truce flags on to his bowed shoulders, "will you break this dreadful silence? Even tell me I am wrong to forgive you; that no *grande dame* should be so peasant-like as say what she may feel; that in France you would kneel humbly for pardon for a year and a day, and then get it qualified and grudging. Why, you are thinking, what a fool is this woman!"

"Helen," said he, the words coming so low and

indistinctly that I bent my head near to listen, "you talk of forgiving me, have I nothing to forgive?"

"Nothing much," said I, masterfully, seeing that he was in a morbid and metaphysical mood, that would, if listened to or reasoned with, attempt to prove that black was white, "and if you have, I know you will forgive it, a Hielander is such a reasonable being."

In spite of his tragic state of mind, Kilmarnock laughed, correcting this with a groan; but try as he might, the tragedy was over, and he suffered to be talked to on indifferent topics, only leaning back sullenly, martyr-fashion.

"What I love in you," said he, at length—though knitting and not love was my subject of discourse—"is that Homeric simplicity you have, that profound faith in your friends. You are more like Helen of Troy than anyone I can image — beautiful, graceful, sincere, and childlike—free from those *minauderies* that, on other women, hang like dust and cobwebs on a fine picture—beautiful honest eyes, shining like——"

"A little candle in a naughty world," I interrupted. "And, sweet Sergius, if you would only keep out of tennis courts, no honester Hielander could be. There's for your Helen of Troy!"

At this he had the grace to blush a little, which I apportioned like a 'pothecary, one grain for himself, the rest for me. Doubtless it was wrong to laugh at him, but so glad was I to see him returning to his old safe ground of friendship that I easily excused myself for it.

After this a sudden seriousness fell upon me. I returned to my seat near the window, musing on the dangers all the men under this roof were running, and how lightly and carelessly they went on over a powder magazine.

To Kilmarnock, the penalty of his active aid to Stuart meant certainly confiscation, and if taken, death, in the event of their losing.

I shuddered at thought of this. Should that grand Titian-like head fall like a felon's! It was too, too horrible to contemplate; and I, if it should be so—how should I reproach myself with unkindness, and think what I might fairly have done to prove that I valued his friendship, pitied and forgave his love! Full of vague fear for him, of forebodings of what might be in the future, I was regarding him earnestly, when he looked up.

"Sergius," said I, mournfully, "if anything ever happens to you, and you neither hear of nor see me, will you promise to always believe me your friend, to whom you are as dear absent as

present, that in any peril or danger I shall think of you? I do not like this business, I cannot spare my friends."

"Do not dishearten them." He rose and came across to where I sat. "The cruellest part to me if we failed would be to grieve you, but we don't think of failing. We are getting on rapidly with the plan of a general rising. We are safe. Helen, give me this ring." He had my hand, and spied on it a gold ring, stamped and chased, a piece of Florentine work.

"Will it fit you?" I drew it from my finger, and slipped it on to his little finger which it barely went over.

"This," said he, "will give strength to my hand, thought to my brain, nerve to my heart. When I am discouraged I will think of my sweet friend, of——"

"He is here," said Sir Burleigh's voice in the anteroom, and he, Stuart, and Stellarig came in.

Kilmarnock had resumed his seat, his sullenness returned on him like a cloud at sight of Stuart, who, apparently without giving himself time to think, went up to him and offered his hand.

Kilmarnock, with perceptible hesitation, took it. To a few low, rapid words from his master, he made an equally low-toned and curt reply. Then they again shook hands.

Sir Burleigh and Stellarig beamed with but half-suppressed satisfaction at witnessing this reconciliation.

And, with a low bow to me in passing, Stuart led the way from our rooms to, I concluded, a business meeting downstairs.

* * * * * *

The grey mists of evening were on the garden paths as, like a solitary prisoner, I walked up and down their damp loneliness. Sounds from the fisher folk outside the walls had ceased. They were all indoors. Stellarig was as lone and silent as its present occupants could desire. Near, the scattered lights of Leith; far off, a few of Edinbro's highest beacons were visible. An infinite sadness filled my mind. All the discontents within doors weighed on me. The hollow truce between Kilmarnock and his master, Sergius' sadness, and Lovat's busy slanders, reported to me by the Laird's cousin, which, so quaintly uttered, had in the morning provoked a smile, to-night seemed hid in the uncertain shadows of the shrubs and trees—hideous shapes ready to pounce upon and strangle me. I had on a woollen shawl, yet the sea fogs came through it, chilling me. The cold induced headache, the gloom heartache. I had not spoken to Stuart all the long grey hours of the day, nor seen him. He was,

as ever, making me scapegoat for another's faults. "None love me!" thought I bitterly. "Would I were back at the farm with M'Causland, back near Rohan's little grave. He is, happily, dead, free from this fret, this turmoil of harsh thoughts, this loveless, ambitious scheming. Why had I come? Had I remained at the Manor it would have safeguarded Sir Burleigh's absence."

I thought and thought till my head burned, and my feet, through contact with the fallen wet leaves, became wet as they. The creeping murmur of the tide on the shingle was distinctly audible. It sounded like eternity, and here, where I was, was a cold, damp hell—void of comfort, of hope—peopled with gloomy, unquiet spirits.

"We must leave this place," thought I. "Sir Burleigh can do nothing with these turbulent Hielandmen; and I, wretched hap, but set them on to quarrel by trying for peace and endeavouring after justice."

A cat, which had been watching me with its glancing eyes peering from the shadows, now came from them, and, by mewing and purring, effected an introduction. Finding it thin and famished, I induced it to follow me to the porter's lodge, with a design of getting it some

fish from the Laird's cousin. Arrived there, I knocked, and was bidden to enter.

The old man was frying fish, and, on my proffering my request, immediately detached a head from one and placed it on the floor, and the cat, without waiting further welcome, began to eat. I was bidden to be seated, and, as though I were another feline mendicant, a well-cooked fish set before me, on a cracked plate, with bread and salt.

It was a strange transition, from gloomy thoughts and complex musings, to this primitive repast. I knew we should dine soon, yet the fish was fresh and tempting, so I ate, laughing, the one candle on the table being pushed nearer to me, "to see the bones," and the cooking going on by firelight.

"Ye can eat another, mileddy," said he, taking my plate, "an' no wholesomer fare is in the warld than fresh fish."

So I ate another, and thanking him, retired, leaving him too absorbed in his frying to do more than assure me I was "verra welcome, an must e'en come as aften as it pleased me." The cat having found so good a haven and host declined my further company, and I returned to the house alone.

"I have dined," I said to Sir Burleigh, whom

I found dressing, "and desire you will excuse me to the Laird."

"Why," said he, "a fish is not a dinner, and the Laird may take it ill if you don't appear."

"Do not imagine it a whim, sir; but I cannot appear, my head aches—I am better alone."

"Very well," said he, "your wish is my law," and so departing. Presently came some hot sea-water I had ordered for a bath, in which I revelled a while, washing off the dulness and dumps of the garden and sitting in my cambric morning-gown over the fire, with bare feet, to warm them ere I got into bed. Sir Burleigh presently came back with some coffee, cake, and a box of French fruit, which he said the Laird had sent with kind compliments.

"They are all pretty glum at missing you," said he, "even Stellarig. Here, my dear, put your feet on a carpet." He looked around, there were none. So, taking off his wig, he made a soft mat of that, notwithstanding my protest that the hearth was warm enough. "If they ask me, Helen, what has become of it, I shall tell them *semper tyrannus*. Yet those pretty pink feet might tread on necks, and honour them by so doing."

"Now, sir, which will you choose for that—a sugared peach or a kiss?"

"The peach," said he. "Well, no—on a

closer inspection, the peach blossom." He stooped and kissed me, and leaving me with my coffee, knitting, and fruit to amuse me, returned to the lower regions, and to politics and whiskey —wigless.

* * * * * *

After breakfast the next day, which we took as usual in our own sitting room, I went to inform the little Laird, as we all called the second Stellarig, that Sir Burleigh had vetoed my going fishing with him and Kilmarnock on account of the dark, angry look of the sea, which was leaden-hued, and ran up to the shore in little hissing waves.

"A vera gude day for fishin'," said the Laird, "though perhaps ye are richt not to go if ye fear a wet skin, for it promises a braw rainfa', an' after a' milord is not going, he hasna lang been to tell me sae. So I'll e'en be a buyer o' other folk's takes, and stay ben an' mend my nets, like Sin Paul."

"You can please yourself," thought I, wandering away round the garden, "but if it promises rain I will take exercise while I may." I had on thick boots and my fisher-girl dress, which the keen sea air rendered suitable and comfortable—a striped woollen petticoat, a dark blue skirt turned up over it and pinned back, a

knitted bodice, and, to complete it, I had knit a *basque* cap of the same colours, though a proper *basque* cap should be red.

"Why is Sergius not going?" I meditated, "surely the dulness of the day would not stop him? Oh! he is here to answer for himself—here, and a lady with him!"

In my astonishment at this female apparition I felt afterwards that my half-alarmed gaze must have resembled the start and stare of Fayre Rosamond, when surprised by the haughty Queen in the maze at Woodstock, though my only fault was a passing thought of Sergius. By a sort of intuition I knew this must be his wife, and, recovering composure, awaited an introduction. This Sergius effected in his usual grave and quiet manner, and we turned and walked on together, talking of the tangled and misordered garden, the bad effect of sea air on flowers, the near approach of winter, and the differences of Scotch and English customs, climate and manners.

Lady Kilmarnock was a kind and kindly Scotswoman of about thirty-three years of age, fair and freckled, with a laughing yet shrewd appearance, and reddish hair; she was tall and moderately thin, with finely shaped hands and feet.

"What is this place?" said she, as we approached the tennis court, "do you know, Sergius?"

"Yes," said he, "'tis an old disused racquet court, Margaret."

"Heyday!" said she, "Lady Clifford will think we are *en cérémonie* if I am not 'Peggy' to you when she learns that my name is Margaret. May I ask yours, Lady Clifford?"

"Helen Rohan," said I, old habit reviving with surprise at her presence — "that is, Helen!"

"Prettier than Peggy, eh? But we must go into this racquet court, I am devoured by curiosity about Stellarig's place, and regard it as an ogre's castle. How dull you must find it here with only men, and not a soul to exchange a word with. I shall ask Sir Burleigh to let me take you away with me up north for a change."

"Sir Burleigh cannot part with her," said Sergius, abruptly, as he led the way into the tennis court.

"How do you know, Sergius? Husbands and wives have been parted ere now, and 'twill be more agreeable to Lady Clifford to have some women to talk to than a lot of old dry-as-dust statesmen, like you, Lovat, Stellarig, and Bal-

merino. She will, I am sure, like to see our dear children and romp with them, being but a girl herself, and thrown away here—a rose in this wilderness. Boyd is a very nice boy, Lady Clifford."

"So I have heard," said I, amused, for instead of paternal elation at this mention of his children, Sergius looked gloomy. "Here," thought I, "is Nemesis," for we had gained the very spot where he had avowed his love for me, and here his wife, in an access of affection, kissed him perforce. I had some ado to look as grave as I ought, and in an idle mood sent a tennis ball rolling close past Kilmarnock's foot, as I had accidentally done yesterday.

"When you are as old as I am, Lady Clifford," said she, "you will learn the value of your husband's love and care for you. There is not a truer husband in the world than Sergius. Why my dear, how came your arm hurt?"

"Fencing," said he, "with Lovat, and the button came off his rapier, but it is nothing, only a scratch."

"I wish," said she, "that Lovat would remember you are no longer a young man, nor so agile as you used to be. For himself, he is a regular cat-o'-mountain, age will never matter to him. I must see to this shoulder to-night,

and dress it for you. See, there is Lady Clifford laughing at you for entering the lists at your age. Well, we will return indoors, this is but a cheerless place. See, Lady Clifford, even true love and kisses will not lighten or brighten it!"

"It looks brighter to me," I say, cheerfully. "Yesterday its moral aspect, if one may associate such with a place, seemed rather dark."

"That was but the reaction on your nerves of its physical damp and mildew. I have, myself, been in places that seemed as though murder had been done in them. You must be brave, I could not come into such a place alone. You should have got Sergius to escort you."

In pity to him I stooped and picked up a racquet, sending a bevy of balls scattering over the floor.

"See," said she, "how Lady Clifford would enjoy a game of tennis with Boyd! Are you for staying, my dear, since we disturbed your walk and must not trespass further?"

"No," said I, "you did not disturb me. I have quite enjoyed your presence, Lady Kilmarnock. Will your stay be long?"

"A couple of days, perhaps, not longer. My family must, could not be left, yet I could not do less than spare time to come and see milord here. Say you will return with me, my dear."

"That," said I, "will depend on Sir Burleigh, though I thank you, madam, for the invitation."

Escorting them to the outer gate I returned within, for the rain, threatening before, had commenced, and I thought to send the balls flying through the empty hall, though at random, would be good exercise. In truth, my surprise at this apparently sudden introduction of Lady Kilmarnock to our household of men-folks needed some settlement in my ideas, which will sometimes be the sooner arrived at by muscular exertion.

In this case no good came of it; the rain without increased the damp within, which engendered cold, till the place was chiller than a vault, and almost as badly flavoured. Escaping from it I ran indoors, getting a pretty pelting from the rain, which, however, was well kept off by my woollen dress.

"What," said I, reaching our own rooms, where I found Sir Burleigh, "does Sergius' wife mean by coming here?"

"God knows!" said he grimly, all his old misogyny reviving. "It's a pity men can't rule their wives better than to have them at their heels everywhere—freckled, too, like a toad."

"Would you not have loved me with freckles, sir?"

"Yes," said he, "and kept you at the Manor, as should Sergius his Margery daw. Chatter, chatter, I'm driven up here by it."

What ingrates men are, thought I. Here has this poor lady, in an access of family affection, sought out the *père de famille* to tell him all home news, and, because she is not beautiful as a dream, all are discontented at her.

"I will be her friend," said I, magnanimously.

"That you shall not," said he. "I mean to lock you up till she has gone, for fear you should learn her trick of running after me."

"Has she that trick"? said I. "Then 'tis I who must lock you up!" and was ostentatiously taking the key from the door, when Stuart and Stellarig came in.

It was abundantly evident from the smile on Stuart's face that he was contented with Lady Kilmarnock's presence. In his first words he said so.

"It will be company for Lady Clifford," said he.

"I want her company myself," growled Sir Burleigh.

"I will go and tell her," said I; "but what excuse must I make to Sergius?"

"Oh, poor Sergius!" said the rest, in an amiable chorus, except Stellarig.

"Puir Sergius!" said he, "puir indeed, to hae a wheen wives rinnin after him, an' nae sae weel governed as stay hame till affairs are settled. I didna ask her. Here by token she comes."

"This is too much," said Stuart, "we shall have now nowhere to come to for peace and quietness. Sir Burleigh, I have learnt misogyny of you!"

"An' baith hate the same woman," muttered Stellarig, whom nobody ever listened to, as Lady Kilmarnock came in, with graceful freedom, as though assured of a welcome.

"We looked for you again," said she to me, after acknowledging the salutations of the rest. "I sent Sergius back to the tennis court with a shawl, fearing you would get wet."

Then she produced knitting, and I, sitting near by, knitted too, taking no notice of the discontent of Stuart, who, finding himself neglected, went wrathfully forth with Sir Burleigh and Stellarig.

"Our husbands are risking a great deal for the House of Stuart," she said, "whiles I feel it would be better if we could content ourselves with what is. You will not feel so; but oh! Lady Clifford, had you a son like Boyd, whom the failure of the cause might ruin and render fatherless, the dynasty that ruled would not seem

to matter much in comparison of his safety—of his father's life. In my heart I am truly for Stuart, yet my mind rebels against the heavy sacrifices the cause entails. I have not seen Kilmarnock for over a year, though in the same country, and I find the excitements of political life have changed him sadly. You will regard him only as one of many grave mid-aged statesmen—I see in him the handsome young laird, my only love. He has not exactly rebuked me for coming," she went on, "yet I feel he thinks it indiscreet. He is the best and kindest of men, the most faithful of husbands; he tells me everything, the smallest minutiæ of his daily life. He often seems to fear it will weary me, yet I delight in it. 'Tis next best to his being with me. I have volumes of his letters."

"I should like to read the omissions," thought I, listening.

A tear trembled on her cheek, which I, because it magnified a small freckle, and made her less pretty, leaned gently forward and dried on my own cambric kerchief.

"You are a sweet girl," said she, embracing me; "I must beg Sir Burleigh to let you return with me and see Boyd."

On my repeating this to Sir Burleigh he d——d Boyd very heartily, and, on next meeting

with dame Margaret, declined her invitation, saying he could not miss me for an hour, which was why he had brought me thither from the Manor.

At dinner that night Stuart devoted himself to Lady Kilmarnock. Sergius was grave and melancholy. I, who sat next him, could not forbear to whisper, "Sergius, be ashamed of yourself, you are found out!"

"As how?" said he, bending his head to listen.

"Lady Kilmarnock tells me you tell her everything in your letters, down to the smallest minutiæ, about everyone; pray, did you?"

"Why should I not?" said he gravely.

"Because," said I, "that ring I gave you was not to be mentioned."

"Take back your ring," said he, so sullenly that, in surprise at this silly teasing having moved him to anger, I was abashed into silence, and in silence took it from him. I had not restored it to my finger when his hand closed on mine.

"Give it me," said he. "I wish to God I dare name it—that it was begged but for a friendly gift—that I could part with it on any terms! But I cannot. It is in such misery as mine that men kill themselves, and are termed mad, in that all outward things prosper with them."

Amidst the general buzz of talk these wild words, breathed rather than spoken, attracted no attention. I sincerely wished the dinner done that I might escape, yet spoke cheerfully, resolved upon chasing away his melancholy, if possible.

"Lady Kilmarnock has asked me to return with her on a short visit."

"Are you going?" said he drearily, as though thought of home was dull and dead, mention of it distasteful.

"Sir Burleigh will not allow me, he cannot spare me; and I, if I miss him for a day, am uneasy, he has been part of my life for so long, and has never been harsh or unkind to me on any one occasion."

"That is but trifling merit, who could be harsh to you? As to his sparing you, it is selfish to enmew you here, when, as Margaret says, a change would do you good."

"I don't like good in that shape," said I, ingratefully. "I am used to all here, and like old friends, though I acknowledge Lady Kilmarnock's goodness in asking me. Shall you return with her?"

"I cannot. I have had kindest leave given, even to pressing it on me as a duty I owe my family." His lip curled as he said these words.

"My obvious duty, in such case, would be to make them paramount over every other earthly consideration. Yet, honour stops me one way, and——"

"And what?"

"Love another!"

"Sergius!"

"Give me the ring," said he, with a sigh.

"It is best not." I slipped it on my finger. "Take some more *salmi*; I have it from physiology that where the brain is affected a good dinner will give relief."

Sergius smiled bitterly.

"Were my madness of the head," said he, "it might; unluckily it is of the heart."

"Yet, knowing that it is madness, you must strive against it."

He made no answer, going on with his dinner in a dull, mechanical way, which I was sorry to note—as when a man of average good sense cannot appreciate fine cookery and good wine, he must be troubled with an uneasy conscience.

* * * * * *

"We will have some music," said Stuart, after dinner, as we all went into the large empty sitting-room. "Lady Kilmarnock, you will sing to us, I am sure."

"Yes," said she—and soon the "Ballad of

Montrose," the "Under the Greenwood Tree" of Shakespere, the "Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament," and other pretty plaintive airs, charmed the strict silence we all held.

She had a sweet voice, and Stuart sang some very charming Italian airs. Then all knowing I did not sing, pressed Sergius to do so.

He sang "Live with me and be my love," we all listening entranced. He had a most delightful tenor voice—strength dipped in sweetness. And seeing he had given pleasure, and on request made, he sang again—

> "Take, oh, take those lips away
> That so sweetly were forsworn."

"Does he not sing delightfully?" said dame Margaret, crossing to where I sat, "as if he felt every word."

"So," said I, "do you."

"No," said she, "time has strained my voice, which, at best, was a mere sweet piping; but the Prince and Sergius were always reckoned good singers."

"I am sorry we did not discover their accomplishments at the Manor," I mused.

"Oh," said she, "Sergius has a mine of noble and good qualities. You could scarce in a lifetime find out all his excellencies, he is of so grave and retiring a nature. Above all things a

statesman, bound to his business as Ixion to his wheel—never giving a thought to any other pursuit."

"Whose is that eulogium?" said Stuart, coming in time for the last words, "Stellarig's?"

"No, sir—my husband's."

"Ay," said Stuart, "he is like an Anglican bishop—husband to one wife, and happy that she is the best in Scotland. I have but one complaint to make of your ladyship. It is that you have not already cured Sir Burleigh Clifford of misogyny. An hour's talk with you could not fail."

Gracefully taking the hint, after a few more words she crossed the room, leaving a vacant seat, which, as Stuart could do no less than escort her, was dexterously occupied by Kilmarnock. So that, on his return, to his speechless wrath, he found himself, instead of *tête-à-tête*, confronted by him.

His eyes flashed fire.

"Helen," said he, "I have been singing for you like a *trouvère*, and now, in the plainest prose, beg five minutes' talk with you."

"Presently," said I. "Sergius has been singing too, and I have promised him a ring, which I bestow publicly as a memento of one amongst a grateful audience."

Stuart's face whitened to the lips with anger as he walked away.

"Take your ring," said I to Kilmarnock, "I truly admired your singing; why, after so admirable a performance, should you so wantonly have caused discord?"

He did not reply, moodily fixing on the ring as though he had not heard me, yet rising and walking away as mechanically as though in a trance.

For some minutes, struggling with disdain and anger, Stuart would not avail himself of the vacant seat; then, coming forward, bowed ceremoniously.

"May I, after battling with a clan, presume so far on my laurels as ——?"

"Stop!" said I, "what business have you battling with loyal clansmen? You are always ill-treating Sergius."

"Why the devil does he interfere with me?"

"I like your rhetorical style best."

"Very little rhetoric will serve to tell you, madam, that ——"

"You are angry."

"Have I not cause? Am not I banished—held away—avoided—shunned? Is it not disgraceful that a man makes no account of his

wife's feelings, but parades openly his admiration of another man's ?"

"If you mean me ——"

"Helen, be silent, for charity, if not for shame; that poor woman's presence should be reproach enough."

"Did you invite, or cause her to come ?" I inquired.

"That," said he, "is not very likely. Is it not Stellarig's house ? What other cause than solicitude for her husband would she need ? They were the most attached couple in Scotland. I am very sorry you were heartless enough to disturb Sergius' peace of mind. I warned you of the mischief like to ensue long enough ago."

"You are unjust to me. I hope I am incapable of hurting Sergius. If he feels friendship for me, why do you, by perpetual interference, mortify him about it? 'Tis natural he likes me."

"I hate him for it," said he fiercely, "and let it go on but a day longer I shall hate you too. I feel my blood rise to fever heat when he speaks to you. It is not jealousy—for I know your part in it is small—but hatred to, and defiance of him. It is bitter as death to me that he is so necessary to my business, yet you, knowing all this, will still amuse yourself. Look to the end, and see

what you gain by inflicting agony on me—disgrace on him. I have in vain given him leave to quit my affairs for a brief visit home. What has home to offer now?—you are not there, and, like a Chaldean, his eyes are on a star—his dreams of it. If he would but return home his senses would come back to him."

"I am going," said I, miserably. "If Sir Burleigh refuses me to go with Lady Kilmarnock, I will back to the Manor."

"Has Dame Margaret asked you?"

"Yes, and wishes it."

"That, doubtless; but I don't wish it, nor would I countenance it. Then we should have a sudden return of family affection, and Sergius posting down. When was this mooted?"

"To-day, but Sir Burleigh declined. He will not, however, refuse my return to the farm while he is here."

"You can ask, Helen. Do you want to go?"

"No," said I, in an access of truthfulness; "yet, by going, if I could restore peace, I were well away."

"Peace, in that sense, will now never be. It is useless to be apportioning blame—probably it began in sincere friendship on his part, and as sincere good faith on yours might have avoided

all this. I am very unhappy about it, but that will not count with you."

So went on reproaches—accusations—as of old, to all which I answered nothing, looking mutely forward to the evening's close, as the miserable in life look to its cessation.

"My dearest, I did not mean to make you unhappy," he leaned forward and spoke low, "but I am wretched myself, and, Helen, own that since you have been here you have not treated me well; yet, sweet, I will forgive you, only smile again."

Sir Burleigh crossed to where he stood.

"What do you say to a walk to Arthur's Seat? The night is fine and, prisoners as we are, a change will do no harm."

"If we do not get too much change, sir," was the reply, "I have no objection."

"I shall not get too much of the change I propose," whispered Stuart, returning to me. "You will come, Helen?"

"It is a risk," opined Stellarig, "sae I'll e'en stay where I'm safe."

"No risk in life," said Sergius, with some interest.

"What! to walk to Arthur's Seat?" replied his wife. "'Tis a crowning folly. I cannot countenance it."

"Eh! but we were fules ere your leddyship cam'," said Stellarig, "an' fules ye'll leave us; sae tak the gude o't, is my counsel to your leddyship."

"I am tired," she said, decidedly, "and will remain with Lady Clifford."

"Helen is coming, madam, by your leave," said Sir Burleigh. "She enjoys a walk, let the risk be never so great."

"Then we must be Darby and Joan," said she, turning to where but a second before Sergius had stood. He had disappeared.

"It will be our housekeep," said Stellarig, with a grin. "We, madam, can play cribbage, if it please ye, till these Solway guses come back."

"I will knit," said she, "and must fetch it, sir," disappearing in her turn.

Cloaked and bewigged we went out, a silent little procession. Sergius met us outside the gate.

"Margaret's fears," he explained, "would not have suffered me to go, so I took French leave."

"Glad of it," said Sir Burleigh, "you can relieve us of Helen—take care of her."

"Take care of your own goods and chattels," said I, taking his arm. "You impose on Sergius' good nature—he is too amiable to refuse, though he would gladly be free."

"Come, go with Sergius," said he, "we would be rid of you awhile, and he will take care of you, as ever."

Sergius offered his arm, I felt it tremble as I put my hand on it.

'Twas a dark, starry night, the sound and smell of the sea were delicious as freedom, after the conflict of passions and emotions within doors. We passed the drawn-up boats, the dark houses of the early-resting fisher folk skirting the higher sand dunes, and silently gaining the highway, walked briskly along—stars twinkling above, long shadows of trees and hedgerows on either side. We did not speak much, conscious that, in spite of our over-confidence, there was much foolhardiness in three, of the greatest value to the cause, being *en prise*, should any unlucky star be in the ascendant. We gained Arthur's Seat and surveyed the city below, and the dark pile of Holyrood in the distance.

With what differing feelings we looked on it. To Stuart's sanguine mind it was already blazing with light, resounding with pageantry and courtly revels. Kilmarnock shivered as he gazed. Sir Burleigh was enwrapped in beatific contentment. His belief in the right of Stuart was not more profound than his faith in his good fortune, merit, and ultimate success.

"It is a shame," said he to me, "when I think of what the lad was born to, and the many crosses and hardships he has so nobly endured—to think one should ever get impatient with him, born to a kingdom. All I ask is to see him settled in it. His little faults of temperament and chafings against restraint will tone down, and he will be another Black Prince."

We were standing in separate groups at some little distance, the others having gone to get a view of a certain embattled tower, we being content with the *ensemble* of the dark building.

"Is there no tocsin," thought I, "no magic bell that will sound of itself, to ring out welcome or warning to its master—so near to his ancestral home, yet such million leagues of chance and change from it? Why should right thus track its way, mole-like, by painful and tedious passes, while might, sword in hand, sits blatant and defying, in the enjoyment of all that ambition can hope or glory pant for?"

In that instant a halo enveloped the image of Stuart. All beside him seemed of coarse and common clay—he alone faultless and perfect. Sir Burleigh must have transmitted some of his perfect faith in him, his unwearying patience with him—to me. I felt then that I had throughout

behaved harshly to him, and with the crude, fancied equality of a pleb to a patrician. My cheeks burned in the darkness to feel how he must, though he loved me, compare me with the sweet graciousness of the courtly beauties to whom from infancy he had been accustomed. I was but a brier-rose, they the velvet exotics of another clime. Yet came the answering reflection, "Which one of all these has loved him as I?" And summer calms, sweet odours, are less life-giving than the fresh untempered breath of moorland and sea.

Succeeding to these thoughts, at once humbling and irritating to my pride, came the conviction that, weighed in an equal balance, talent for talent, we were equal. "The rest," said I, "is but matter of habit and custom. Had I been Court-bred, none of the dames there had outshone me in niceness and *finesse*, and, for one versed in Socratic philosophy, I am giving too much prominence to the accident of birth. For, as he says of the herd of men—

"'When they sing the praises of family, and say that someone is a gentleman because he has had seven generations of wealthy ancestors, a philosopher thinks that their sentiments only betray a dull and narrow vision in those who utter them, and who are not educated enough to

look at the whole, nor to consider that every man has had thousands and thousands of progenitors, and among them have been rich and poor, kings and slaves, Hellenes and barbarians, many times over. And when people pride themselves on having a pedigree of twenty-five ancestors which goes back to Heracles, the son of Amphitryon, he cannot understand their poverty of ideas. Why are they unable to calculate that Amphitryon had a twenty-fifth ancestor who might have been anybody, and was such as fortune made him, and he had a fiftieth, and so on? He amuses himself with the notion that they cannot count, and thinks that a little arithmetic would have got rid of their senseless vanity. Now, in all this our philosopher is derided by the vulgar, because he is thought to despise them.'"

Much consoled by thinking this over, which I had learnt word for word years ago, being struck by its truth, Stuart slowly reassumed his familiar aspect to my mind; Holyrood, though as distinct, grew less important. The halo faded, and a kiss from Sir Burleigh, who was wondering at my long silence, by its realism brought back realities—as a shafted sunbeam entering a room full of shadows reduces them to order and proportion.

We wandered on along the brow of the hill, a gusty wind, rain-laden, sweeping over us—silence and solitude around. It was now near midnight, the city sleeping, every little sound mingling with the wind brought distinctly to us. The sentries on duty below, dimly seen, passing and repassing. No sign of either Stuart or Sergius.

"Where can they be?" In some anxiety Sir Burleigh was looking around for them, when they came in sight, Stuart laughing.

"I have been interviewing the soldier below," said he. "Ah, 'twas diverting to be told that, as a student—which was what he took me for—I was liable to arrest as a Jacobite, and might have ado to clear myself to the provost, but he 'didna want to be haird on a' wheen fule young men, wha thought it a fine thing to rin risks an' get their folk into trouble; that he had a cousin seventh in the College himsel', an' thocht o' him when he saw the rest whirligigin' wi' Jacobite sangs aboot the streets an' closes, an' a bit stretched his duty, the more that he was o' the Clan Stuart himsel'—Stuart o' Appin.' Come on' Sir Burleigh," he concluded, "I gave him but a Scots shilling, lest, otherwise, my want of poverty might be a suspect to me, and he may repent my non-arrest."

"For God's sake, on!" said Sir Burleigh. "It was, sir, a little rash, for none can forget your face, once seen."

"I muffled it," said he, "in my plaid—thus. Yet we will hurry on. Allow me to escort milady home, Sir Burleigh."

In his haste to be gone Sir Burleigh agreed, and he and Sergius led the way rapidly homeward.

"Blessings on that sentry!" said Stuart, as we followed. "I would have roused a lion to follow us, so Sergius should not walk home with you."

"Will he follow?" said I, alarmed.

"He may," said he carelessly, "or not, as his Scots blood or Guelph pay prompt him; but, sweet, such risks are too familiar to me to annoy or disquiet. No, I don't think he will—in any case he will but go to the College, and there the professors have a daily fight of it, with the students' loyalty to us. By— when we are in I'll endow that College to some purpose."

"Take, oh, take those lips away."

"Well, Helen, if you don't, how can I?"

"Stop," said I, "we shall lose the others."

"I am afraid they are lost. Yes, we have taken a wrong turning. Never mind, I know every twist and turn of Arthur's Seat. We are not trackers. Why should we haunt Sir Burleigh

and Sergius? If we are arrested—for I can testify that you are a Jacobite—they may escape. Oh, bliss if we were in the same dungeon!"

"Hush!" said I, as in his wild exuberance of spirits he spoke aloud. "I thought I heard a step; I am sure of it—listen!"

We had but just turned round an abrupt curve, formed by a large mass of rock, half hidden in broom, ferns and furze, when we were met face to face by a soldier—he had clubbed his musket, and, aiming a desperate blow at Stuart's head, barely missed him, striking the rock at the back, which gave a sharp metallic clang. Retreating a step, without the pause of an instant, Stuart sprang on him. Both went down, grappling in the wet undergrowth. Terrified into inaction, I watched them for a moment—then, seizing a stone at my foot, watched till I got fair aim, and stooping struck the man's head with it with all the force I had, which was not little.

"You she-devil," said he, hissing out the words, yet confused by encountering two assailants—beginning to pant, to give in, to aim wild blows at me, which Stuart availed of to draw his dirk, and, half rising, hold it at his throat, his knee on his chest.

"I give in," said the man, grinding his teeth

in rage, "your —— has saved you," using a dreadful word of me.

"Give me your scarf," said Stuart, panting. "Bind his hands, Helen—don't be afraid, a move, and I'll slit his throat—do it strong and leisurely."

"Here's another," said I in despair; but it was Sergius, who, without a word, flung himself on the prostrate wretch, holding him by the throat, while Stuart, taking the strong silk scarf from me, tied his hands, muffled his head in a plaid, and he and Sergius—each giving him an admonitory kick, which seemed a way of hinting to him that he might rise—took an arm and hurried on in silence. I picked up his cap and the musket, as traces liable to be followed up, and carrying them went swiftly after.

We had before made some distance of our homeward way—now it seemed to fly, for before recovering from my amaze and excitement we were in the grounds of Stellarig, and the man, still bound, thrust into a strong underground cellar, locked in, and the little Laird summoned as jailor, who, wrapped in a plaid and provided with whiskey, made no objection.

Sir Burleigh, who came in a few minutes after us, full of disquiet, was very little reassured by a detail of the adventure. Fortunately, Lady Kil-

marnock was asleep, so our council consisted of but the usual lot, less the Laird, whose curiosity induced him to keep his cousin company.

"My determination," said Stuart, putting aside some suggestions as to the disposal of the prisoner, "is to hurry him into the Highlands. Seen, 'twill look like a desertion to us. Not seen, so much the more fear will the mystery create. You agree to that, Sergius?"

"It will do, sir. I will get two runners at once."

He went out by the sea-gate, and presently reappeared with two wild-looking fisher-lads, slight, slim, and wiry as mountain-cats, armed with dirks, "which," said Sergius, "in their able hands, are more to be feared than any pistols."

Sergius spoke to them in Gaelic.

They answered laconically by a word, both uttering it as in one breath.

"Bring up the fellow," said Stuart, "we will God-speed him."

Sir Burleigh went down, and, with his hand on the miserable captive's collar, led him in.

"You are about," said Stuart, addressing him, "with these men as guard, to visit the Highlands; any attempt at a rescue or escape is instant death. Let fifty men appear within a

yard of you, their duty, which will be faithfully performed, is first to cut your throat, then ensure themselves if they can. Do you understand this, plainly?"

"Yes, milord," said the man, trembling, with mingled rage, fear and awe. "May I, milord, have my cap?"

I brought it forward. At sight of me the poor wretch started, then went on his knees.

"Young lady," said he, "be merciful; if I go with these men it is but to be murdered in some pass of the hills, thrust down some ravine. Let their orders be what they may, these are unwrit laws to them."

"Scoundrel!" said Sergius, "do you doubt our word?"

"Madam," said he, not listening, "say a word for me."

"'Tis useless," said Stuart, "and were you put away, is it more than your desert, villain? Did you not try to murder me?"

"No," said he, "I meant to stun you and take you alive."

"Can you, therefore, expect better usance from us?"

"Yes," said he, boldly, "had you been bound, you had not now been here, if such were fair usage."

"Give him assurance of his life," said I, "so long as he does not attempt escape."

Sergius, though unwillingly, again addressed the two Highlanders, the prisoner's wild eyes seeming to devour their impassive and grim features. They touched their dirks significantly, and I, who had some Gaelic, translated it to an order not to go out of their way to kill him.

"Guard, but do not kill him," said I, boldly.

They both stared. Stuart repeated it, and the man, who was a humble, poor wretch of an English soldier, thanked me fervently. Going out into the dark night with his savage, cat-like guards, against whose agility strength was vain, I did not envy him his journey, nor believe much in his chances. Yet I had done what I could, and we all separated, in nowise more uneasy for this incident, as desertions to the Highlands were now numerous, in spite of General Wade and his roads—whether perforce, as in this case, or willingly, I was never told.

We none of us rose over-early next morning, yet Sir Burleigh was dressed and away before I lifted my head from the pillow. The confusion of last night was upon me, I scarce knew for certain whether or no I had not dreamed at least some of its incidents. The scent of coffee came in from our sitting-room; I longed for a

cup, yet felt too inert and powerless to rise and fetch it. We had no attendant but Kilmarnock's servant, so I could not ring for it to be brought, and lay speculating as to how long Sir Burleigh would be away, closing my eyes and dozing into endless cobweb dreams. Waked from these by a movement in the next room, and concluding that it must be Sir Burleigh, I requested a cup of coffee to be brought in.

"Bring it quickly," said I, with some impatience, "I have been waiting so long for it."

To my astonishment—for no reply came—it was brought to me by Lady Kilmarnock, who looked very grave.

I felt angry at this intrusion of an almost total stranger, yet thanked her, civilly, apologising for my mistake.

"I thought," said I, sipping it as I sat up in bed, "that it was my husband, not expecting your ladyship."

"Pray," said she, "let that pass—other people have not expected my ladyship. Oh! Lady Clifford, was it well done to take away the love of a married man from his wife, his bairns?"

"Whom do you mean?" said I, temporizing.

"You are lovely!" she went on, a tear twinkling in her eyes. "I allow all your charm, your soft voice and graceful sincerity of manner. I

can almost pardon Kilmarnock; but not so you, since he has so befriended you in every way that the vanity of the vainest coquette would have spared him the misery you have inflicted."

"His own self-respect might have spared you this visit, this expostulation," I rejoined. "I had a truly friendly regard for him, and from patience and pity have listened to much that I regret now I should have suffered him to speak. That is all I can be justly charged with, believe me, Lady Kilmarnock."

"You did not encourage his delusions in any way?"

"Not consciously," said I. "Illusion may found itself on trifles not meant to foster it."

"Such," said she, crimsoning with anger, "as rings, assignations, kisses; as getting him appointed, on account of his known gravity, as your constant escort; receiving letters from him, making him your confessor, meeting him in the tennis-court, going fishing with him."

"You are tedious," said I; "any list of the actions of any day, might, by being made into a muster-roll, wear a strange supernal aspect. If all this were allowed, it proves nothing but that we were old friends; and now, madam, having disclaimed your accusations, give me leave to rise."

"You false, fawning hussy!" said she, striking me violently in the face with a very bony hand, more than once, "you shall rise with the marks of an honest Scotswoman on your beautiful, tempting devil's face." And as she spoke, beside herself with fury, she aimed yet another blow at me.

"You may kill me," said I, trembling with shame and humiliation at being struck. "You can have but the truth."

Yet, when in her towering fury, she had left the room, I hid my bruised face in the pillows, wondering that any woman should so degrade herself by anger as to lose control of her own passions, to raise her hand, to strike, like the lost creatures of the *coulisses* of whom I had heard.

When Sir Burleigh at length came I had drawn down the dark blinds of the windows, and, professing fatigue, begged him to go.

"Why," said he, "'tis nearly luncheon time. Will you not rise, Helen? you can have a *siesta* after. Lady Kilmarnock has gone. She might, I think, have waited to bid you farewell. She had but one servant to attend her, and would not suffer Sergius to go to Edinbro' with her. She seems a quiet, decent body."

"She has horrid bony hands," said I, hiding

my face deeper in the pillow. "No, I cannot get up. There is the luncheon bell!"

He stooped to kiss me, but my face was entirely covered.

"You are very strange," said he testily, going. "I hope this mood will be over before we meet again."

"If the marks are gone it will," thought I, as he went out. Then burst into tears, and sat up, wringing my hands. Not that I was so overproud of my beauty, but that I had been so shamefully struck, through the insane fury of a jealous woman whom I had not injured.

After a while I rose tremblingly, and bathed my face in rosewater, keeping a towel wet with it on the burning, livid marks of her angry fingers. How should I face the circle downstairs? Sir Burleigh would insist on the truth, and Sergius be unjustly disgraced by this folly of his wife's. In the end, as I sat by the open window, the sea-wind cured the angry fever of my skin, leaving only a small bruise here and there, and an unusual pallor. So, dressing more carefully than usual, I was able to pass muster at dinner—though I saw Sergius was deadly pale, and feared he knew of it, which I would willingly have spared him. To my great relief some dispatches or letters came in while we

were at dinner, which, having to be considered in council, left me leave to escape. Tired and dispirited, I returned to our own rooms, whither Stellarig, with good-natured officiousness, presently followed me.

"Dinna fear," said he, "for last nicht. I remarked that your leddyship looked pale an' ill, an' reason gude, for ye know not auld Reekie, nor the strong current there is here for the richt ruler. The vera Provost himsel' is a Stuart, an' no mean one."

I talked of I know not what to the Laird—fast and anxiously of Lady Kilmarnock, of her singing, her devotion to Sergius; of the prisoner of last night, and his chances on the lonely Highland route with his fierce guides, and their more than ambiguous orders—for the slightest movement they might choose to construe an attempt at escape.

"If so," said he philosophically, "'tis but weel earned. The villain wad hae killed the Prince; an' to tell true, I marvel your leddyship should beg for such."

"Why," said I, "we English do not love assassination in any shape, or for any object, let us be never so sanguinary in fair fight."

"Then," he asked, "wad ye, for that rascal's life, hae had the city roused on us?"

I stopped perplexed, unable just then to argue it out to its reasonable conclusion. "I am no match for you in argument," I allowed to the gratified Laird, who was recommencing the whole question, to enjoy a second victory, when a knock came to the door of the anteroom, and, bidden to enter, Sergius came in.

"It is nearly supper time, Laird," said he—and Stellarig, revolving his mental casuistry anent the prisoner, trotted off.

"Well," said I, as cheerfully as I could, though the tears stole to my eyes, "so we, it seems, need apprehend no trouble from last night. How fortunately your coming happened. Will the men be far away by now?"

"About fifty miles," said he, "of difficult hill paths. Those Hieland runners stop for nothing, and pricked on by their dirks the fat Englishman will learn what hill walking is."

"I have no objection," said I, "either patriotic or special."

"Helen!" said he abruptly, "why are you looking so ill—so unhappy? Nay, I know; so tell me the whole—I feel as though the shame of it consumed me. Lady Kilmarnock struck you! She dares tell me so in a letter just received from Edinbro'."

"She boxed my ears," said I lightly, "for

what may have seemed to her impertinence. Sergius, give me the letter, so"—(I put it in the fire)—"now forget it. It is not creditable to either. I did not mean to provoke her, I was sleepy and saucy, forgetting that to her my friendship for you might reasonably wear a dark aspect; and when she, as she had a right, asked me of it, I believe I answered irritably and unsuitably. I will write and beg her ladyship's pardon, that I had no more patience or manners."

"You shall not put me off so," said he, "I will know the whole."

"For God's sake, then, if you are going to strike, let it be with a dirk, or something conclusive—I hate being beaten about the head."

Secretly I was longing for sympathy, for I had suffered much from the pain of the blows—the indignity borne in silence consumed me like slow fire. I had in my own view rather been patient with Sergius as with one in a fever or delirium, hoping for the return of reason, tenderly bearing with the excesses of an insanity which would be but temporary—hiding the faults of a friend, and for so doing had been cruelly misapprehended.

Tears fell in heavy drops on to my hands. The pain of my head confused me—I longed to be

able to make light of it to him, to have the stoicism of silence; yet his sympathy was precious, and with the selfishness of suffering I would not repel it.

"It will seem to you," said I at length, "that I am trying to add to your disquiet. Why did you come in while it is so newly present to me? To-morrow I might have held silence, as I truly meant to. To-night I am in pain, more for you than myself, and exaggerate all things."

"By ——," said he, "you do not. That frantic woman shall have some order taken with her. My dear Helen, if you knew how I felt about this!"

"To-morrow," I said. "Go now, Sergius, yet promise me not to think it weighs with me as it now appears to do. If you had not come you would not have heard of it from me. Probably she boxes Boyd's ears," I concluded, laughing, "and perchance yours, so I am not the only victim to her ladyship's strength of wrist. You see, I have never been beaten before, and—and —I rather like it on reflection—'tis only the novelty is disagreeable. We have Scripture for it, 'Those who know right and do it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

I rose and walked about, trying to laugh, to jest—partially succeeding, for I could not bear

the misery of his face and attitude. There was somewhat that was tragic in this interview, though so slight a cause produced it as an angry woman's uncontrolled temper. It had, in his proud and sensitive mind, degraded him—even my forgiveness was an added sting. I was in despair, and wished I had been born dumb, or, better still, not at all.

"What good is my life to me?" said I at last, laying my hand on his shoulder. "You will not try to help, to understand me. For God's sake let this wretched accident be as non-existent! Have you not done ten thousand kind and friendly acts for me, yet grudge me this little unheroic sufferance for you? To-morrow 'twould have been forgotten. Sergius, forgive me! I could not resist your sympathy. In all my many troubles I have claimed it. Would you shut your heart to me because I am a fool —weak, ungrateful? What do I care for Dame Margaret or her anger? I will kiss you again, for spite."

"Don't be so supremely absurd," said he, the tense lines round his mouth relaxing into a slight smile as I kissed his cheek. "Helen!"

"Well?"

"Assure me I am forgiven."

"Of course you are. Only don't forgive me,

for I feel I ought to be punished for making much of a trifle, just to get pitied like a child. You know I always incline to you for pity. You ought to teach me to be more stoical. Now, good night." I accompanied him to the door, and had the happiness of seeing that he looked less unhappy than on his entrance.

"I were a wretch and an unconsidering fool," thought I, "if I let this Scotch housewife and her vulgar ethics dissolve our friendship." Yet, as I sat over the fire, in its glowing depths I saw self-pity weeping over unearned wrong—and so, divorcing myself from visions, went to bed, wrapping up my aching head in a silk handkerchief, which is a sovereign thing for aches and pains, and forgot all the whole world in dreamless sleep.

* * * * * *

There is nothing much in a thread of blue silk, a seal with armorial bearings on it, an unopened packet. Yet when my eyes opened in the morning, and Sir Burleigh gone, I saw these on his pillow, I lay still, wondering and gazing, for a long time, without attempting to possess myself of it, or see if it were indeed for me.

It was a strange writing, a lady's hand. I broke the seal, silk, and cover, and read :—

"Edinbro',

"On my way North.

"I beg your pardon a hundred times for what passed yesterday. Do not think me a fury—a vulgar termagant. Remember me only as a wronged, heartbroke wife. I have had a cruel letter from Sergius, such as no man would pen were it not that he hated the person addressed, and valued the one writ of beyond life, honour, or any earthly thing.

"I do hope you are not hurt, most truly. I see now you was not all to blame, but the fickleness and variableness of men's love. On my knees I beg your pardon, not for my words—which, alas! were too true—but for the frantic act of striking you. Forgive me, so prays your humble obliged servant,

"MARGARET, Lady Kilmarnock."

"Poor wretch!" thought I, tearing it into minute fragments, "I have forgiven you. Sergius was a fool to interfere. Why could he not let us tear caps about him in peace? Men are all fools. She will go home and beat Boyd, if he is not too big—if he is, the next one. I would not like to be him. An universal migration of the clan to the North Pole would not be amiss, and leave Sergius alone. No wonder he is loyal, if

it keeps him from home. Even Stellarig must be livelier than a place where one's ears are perpetually in danger. She must be a descendant of Caiaphas, the high priest, who cut off St. Peter's ear—or was it St. Peter? Any how, I must rise and dress. The rack shall not extort a word of this from me. There has been fuss enough."

Throwing the fragments of the letter on the fire while I dressed, I told Sir Burleigh, who asked after it, that it notified Lady Kilmarnock's going North.

"That is nothing to you," said he scornfully. "Was I Sergius I would get a divorce, on account of her freckles and red hair."

"I will get," said I, "some hobgoblin to turn me into a red dwarf, and then defy you, sir, to part with me."

"That I would never do," said he. "I could more willingly part with life, you slut, and you know it."

We were very happy that day, so much does the removal of one discordant element restore harmony. In the evening we went to the theatre in Edinbro', a good deal disguised, and heard the students, while waiting for the curtain to rise, yell out snatches of Jacobite songs, in which Charlie was a good deal apostrophised, and his bonnie blue een made free mention of. He had

on spectacles to-night and a dark wig, and sat in the gallery amongst some Hanover soldiers, whom, coming home, he protested were honest fellows, as they took him for a professor, and pitied him for having such insubordinate rake-hells to manage as the students, and told him of a deserter, surmised to have gone to the Highlands, as his cap had been picked up by a scouting party in a pass some twenty miles beyond Edinbro'.

Yet, though we enjoyed the change, 'twas in fear and trembling. The Prince was too daring, and took off his spectacles once to look for me, who was seated in the pit with Sir Burleigh, alleging he could not see through them. Yet all passed without mishap, as a screaming farce amused the people so much as to render them for the time forgetful of political affairs.

"We are going to the Highlands to-morrow," said Stuart, as we walked home, "news of my being in Edinbro' is generally credited in London, though Auld Reekie is obstinately incredulous, I think wilfully so. However, Sergius insists on our going, you and I, *le mari*, Sergius, and the little Laird as cook, a lonely party. You can wear your fisher-dress, it is warm; we never wash ourselves up there, but go comfortably dirty, to save luggage. You will see your friend, the prisoner."

"A variety of inducement," I laughed, "but what is to eat?"

"Cockles and red deer, very good fare, Helen. Do you think I would take you to starve? Have we not hiren here?"

"Good Captain Peesel, be quiet. I am not going with such a flock of Solway geese."

"You are, so make up your mind, sweet. What! the good year, and you never seen the Highlands! —of course you're coming."

So, though we got home very late, tired, excited, elate, and full of laughter, we were up early in the misty morning, and I, having packed a few things in a valise, did go with them—locking up our rooms, and leaving Stellarig deserted.

For some miles I saw nothing of any of our party, save and except the little Laird who was my guide, the rest having started at dawn, or even before; and as I had a tolerably well-filled valise to carry, and he a large packet of various necessaries, we might have passed, to outward sight, if any took the trouble to observe us at all, as a fisher-girl and an elderly kinsman trudging to some distant hill-folk for the day. But we soon left the sound of the sea behind, striking off the high road into a rugged moor, the tough heather of which caught even at my

short skirts, and convinced me that the kilt, the national dress, has its use and significancy in a country where, in the hills at least, paths are unknown, and a track only discernible by the skilled natives. The Laird trotted on in advance, wasting no breath in words. It seemed to me that we made very rapid progress; yet, stopping for a moment after some hours' walking, he said:

"They must be at least twenty miles in advance of us, and perhaps still walking. You," he commented with a grin, "are tired, mileddy, yet tired or not we must on—twenty mile or mair."

So on we went, I scarce noting the character of the country, for the care I was forced into to preserve my skirts from the tough whin-bushes and heather. On, on, till the adventure became a pilgrimage—the pilgrimage an expiation of all the sins of a lifetime—so blistered were my feet, so worn and weary my limbs.

"Let us at least rest," I pleaded at length, wishing I had not come, or had a humaner guide.

"Rest," he repeated derisively. "Atweel theys ten gude miles yet, an,' once stop, it is not possible for Southron folk to move again for a week, their soft muscles are so stiffened by unusual exercise."

"Well," I replied hardily, "I will stay here a week—I cannot move on."

"Here, gie me the vallis," said he, "an tak' heart o' grace. Sae ye step lighter for havin' nought to carry."

In effect, as it had to be done, we went wearily on, climbing endless hills, diving through dark defiles, out again into the open. And the day was very far spent, the cold mists rising, when I drew the Laird's attention to a distant light.

"It is some cottage," said I, "and there I will stop the night. I am worn out—nor can scarce drag one foot after another."

"There you shall stop," said he gravely, "and on to-morrow, if ye'll rise airly."

"Oh, yes," I eagerly agreed. "Indeed I would not give in for a trifling fatigue—but I am truly spent."

"Hoot!" said he, "ye are fresh as a rose, 'tis but fancy—ye suld by rights be a Highland lass, sae weel as ye fit the heather. There is the gudeman, I'se warrant, collecting his cattle for the nicht. Gae ye forward an' ask him if he will tak in twa tired puir bodies frae Leith."

I went forward, too tired to seem aught but indifferent; but in the dusk distinguished that the advancing figure was that of Sir Burleigh.

"Why, Helen!" said he, "Stuart and Sergius

have started back in search of you, thinking Stellarig must have missed the way."

"Nae fear for Stellarig," said he, unpacking. "An' here they come—have tracked us up closely."

"Get me a stone or something to sit on," said I indifferently. "Is there no shelter, sir?"

Looking round on the bleak and bare hillside I saw a Highland cabin, such as are left from year to year unvisited, save by the trackers of red deer. It looked dirty and dilapidated, yet had been, Stuart assured me, who now came up with Kilmarnock, specially cleaned out and arranged with a view to my comfort and Sir Burleigh's. We all went inside laughing. The roof was low and sloped, the floor of earth. At one end was a rough hammock, fixed to the beams of which the walls were composed; at the other a heap of brush, for a bed.

"We could not light a fire," said Sergius, "or would have smoked you out, but I assure you Saunder thoroughly swept and cleaned it."

A shelf overhead held our valises. It was dry, and, being against the side of the hill, comparatively warm, let alone that tall whin-bushes and gorse grew against it and kept off the wind.

"We have tents," said Stuart, pointing to two

or three dark leather *tumuli*, like black mushrooms, planted on the flat, below the cabin and between it and the fire. I peeped into these as we went down to the fire, dinner being now ready. In each was a pile of heather for a bed, nothing more.

"What more do we want?" said Stuart gaily. Cold! oh, no! Highlanders are seldom cold; we shall stick the doors and sleep like others. You will have a couple of deerskin rugs, a pillow, and all sorts of luxuries, for which you must thank Kilmarnock, who contrived them. For you poor weak Southrons are not children of the hills, they are but step-dames to you. See, dinner awaits us."

Giving me his hand, he led me to a pile of brushwood, which formed a soft and comfortable seat. All the others, just saved from the cold ground by a strewment of the same, were in their places. We had some excellent crayfish-soup in deep pewter platters, dipped hot from a large saucepan standing on raked-out embers; then a fry of minced collops, with bannock bread, and last, the familiar griddle-cakes and whisky, which almost made it seem we were back at Stellarig. Talk turned on former expeditions to the Highlands.

"If," said Sergius, addressing me, "we go up

higher into the hills, Lady Clifford, do not expect a house such as here you have. We shall be cave-dwellers, which, for my part, I like better. Caves are warmer than tents."

Then they fell to talking of primitive man, of the first cave-dwellers. The whisky went round, the warmth of the fire kept away even thoughts of cold, but fatigue was not so baffled. Bidding all good rest, I went to our cabin, and was soon in the hammock and asleep, having, after some debate with selfishness, which together with cold was for getting the better of me, given up one of the deerskin rugs for Sir Burleigh, who, coming in very late, threw himself with many sighs on to the heaped-up heather; while the rest, sitting for awhile outlined against the fire, at length withdrew, each to his tent.

The pleasant sleep of fatigue soon held us all. In the pure, yet keen air, we felt cold less than by the sea. Perchance in the deep, dreamless slumber was Nature indemnifying herself for over-exertion—certain it is, no thought of our strange lodgment disturbed our dreams.

In the morning Sir Burleigh's hand shook from me the last delicious sense of repose.

"Come," said he, "I am sorry to wake you, but Sergius and the rest are withdrawn to give you a time for your toilet." He passed in a bowl

of cold water, some soap, and a rough towel, in which, after bathing my face, I was glad to lave my feet. Then unpacking the valise I got a comb and fresh stockings forth from it, and having arrayed myself, or rather arranged my dress—for I had been too tired to remove it the night before—I came out.

The morning was cold, misty, and wretched. Our camp was on a little depressed tableland on the hillside. The ravines below were full of chill mist-wreaths, and looked cold and dreary. A fire of green boughs was smoking terribly. The little Laird, unconcerned by it, was cooking some haddocks. Sir Burleigh walked growling up and down to get warm. I could not walk, on account of my swollen and blistered feet, and sat down wrapped in a plaid by the fireside, watching the cooking. Stellarig gave me good-morrow, inquiring if I was rested, then turned his attention again to the fish. The cold and discomfort of the late autumn camp seemed to affect neither Stuart nor Sergius to any appreciable extent, due, doubtless, to their being Hielanders. They came up just as breakfast, steaming and hot, was placed on a cloth laid on a flat stone. There haddies, griddle-cakes, butter, coffee, and porridge—all most excellently cooked by the little Laird, and served by Kilmarnock's man. We

began to grow less silent and reserved, as we saw that even this chill wilderness had its alleviations, and, but for my blistered feet, I could have been even cheerful. As it was, I am afraid the old barrack-house of Stellarig assumed substantial attractions, and thoughts of rheumatism for Sir Burleigh or myself mingled with and marred the flavour of the coffee and haddocks.

About the middle of the meal, passing my cup over my shoulder to be refilled by the valet, as I thought, I saw the rest all smile, and looking back, saw a tall man standing where the servant had stood—a black-bearded, stalwart Scot, looking intensely embarrassed, and nearly dropping the cup as he took it from me.

"I beg your pardon," said he, in very northern English. "I thought you were my cousin, Leddy Kilmarnock, an' designed to surprise her."

"Stuart of Appin," called out the Prince, "I am right glad to see you!"

"And I," "And I," echoed the rest.

"Sit down, man," said Stellarig impatiently—for he impeded the approach of the servant with a dish of haddies. "Sit down, an' bow when ye are lower in the world."

"Yes," said Stuart, "excellent counsel. No ceremony here. Sit down, Appin, and breakfast with us."

"Thank ye, my lord!" He hesitated, and looked for a vacant space. I made room for him, and he sat with extreme shyness and diffidence next me, not saying another word till addressed by Sergius or the Prince, then answering only in briefest words.

In spite of this new arrival the mist still seemed to damp and deaden all attempts at general conversation. Sir Burleigh yawned, and the Prince having risen walked away with him, leaving an uncomfortable trio to keep Stellarig company, who seemed to design eating till summer came round again.

Appin glanced at me curiously once or twice as he ate. Sergius looked at him sternly, as though he were using an intolerable freedom by so doing. I was amused at these furtive and alarmed glances, and would have asked him after Lady Kilmarnock but for Sergius being there.

When at length the Laird concluded his horrid meal, releasing us, we all rose, and Stuart returning, formal introductions to this chief of the Clan Appin were effected.

"He is the shyest man I know," whispered the Prince to me, "but immensely dignified. I must make much of him. Meanwhile, sweet, rest yourself, and after 'honeying and making love' to him, I will return to *you*."

"What's that?" said Sir Burleigh, coming up as they went off.

"A bit of Shakespere, sir."

"D—— Shakespere and the mist too," he rejoined testily. "I believe I'm bewitched, to find myself flown up here on a broomstalk, with nothing between me and a death by gout than a handful of green boughs."

"Do you not feel well, sir?"

"Never better in my life, but you will get cold."

"No question of it, sir. I forgot to last night, being too tired. To-night, punctually, I'll get catarrh and rheumatism."

"I shall, however, send you back to Stellarig. 'Tis not the cold alone, but I don't choose Appin and all the rest to see you here."

He spoke dourly, something had vexed him.

"That I sacrifice my own comfort should be enough. I will not risk your health and well-being."

"Oh, well," said I rebelliously, "I will not return alone. If I go so must you, Sir Burleigh —yet why should we? You say the air agrees with you, with me it will admirably—and Stellarig, deserted by you all, will be but a prison-house; while here, but for the one draw-

back of cold, 'tis pleasant enough. The cold one will soon get accustomed to."

"D—— the cold!" said he. "I no more than the rest need complain of it, nor do not."

Then he was angrily silent, something had ruffled him.

"What is it?" I passed my arm through his, taking his hand. "You are vexed. Is it with me?"

"Not with, but on your account, Helen. I do not choose you shall put up with discomforts such as this."

"They are none to me, sir, assure yourself, while you are with me. Why will you concern yourself?"

"I have other reasons," said he abruptly, "and my consent to your coming was wrung from me by the importunity of the rest, who, no more than myself, can bear you out of their sight. Kilmarnock, not the least, over-persuaded me that you would pine and fret left alone at Stellarig."

"I will return if it be your will, Sir Burleigh, yet let me stay with you."

For awhile he would not listen, arguing that I was but a silk-leaved rose, and ran risks he did not choose to countenance, in the cold and mists of the hills.

"Other men's wives," said he, "are lapped in luxury. Must mine be a hill-tramper? You look yourself in a palace, and to risk you here is cruelty."

"I am myself only where you are," said I, shedding tears at this offered parting. "I hate separation from you. Come with me, and I willingly return. Do not banish me, or I shall think it is that you have ceased to love me, sir."

In truth, to miss him seemed cruelly hard to me. I could scarce bear him from my sight, unless knowing that any moment might recall him. In his presence was a sweet sense of rest, of security, and his constant indulgence and tenderness rapped away from me countless vexations.

"What do I need of luxury," said I, drying my eyes, "country-bred as I am?"

"My dear," said he drily, looking down on the littered camping-ground, "this is certainly not luxury. Yet stay if you will, till I contrive myself to take you back to Leith."

What had put him on this I know not, perhaps some small vexation at Appin's presence and wondering glances. Presently all thought of sending me away seemed to leave him, as he planned improvements to our temporary home; and as the day waxed less cold he grew more

cheerful, his anger waning, and the hills assuming a more desirable aspect as a residence.

Yet the day was dull to me. He was vexed, and that being so, I must needs be unhappy, loving him so well.

* * * * * *

When Job called upon his couch to comfort him, 'twas likely some broad divan with silken cushions—not an ill-hung hammock, with a stiff deerskin coverlet—and he had not, to add to his afflictions, the distant hum of voices of half-a-dozen Highlanders, drawling out their nasal Gaelic, and talking incessantly, like vocal pibrochs.

It was too early, with this prospect before me, to enter the uninviting hovel, so after dinner I left the circle, having myself but little Gaelic, and walked apart.

The moon had risen over the hills—large, cold, and solemn, it shone down on this handful of desperate adventurers and on me who, like a second Psyche amongst robbers, had strayed in amongst their fortunes. I went on through the whinbushes and scattered stones to a higher level, whence I could look down on the party. Several new chiefs had joined us by this, amidst whom sat Stuart of Appin, conspicuous by his long black beard; the others were small wiry Hie-

landers, only distinguishable to me from each other by the plaids of their respective clans. The large cooking fire lent light and warmth to the gipsy-like circle, and their faces took strange unfamiliar wavering lines. To me it all appeared as a dream, from which I must presently awaken —a vision of the night.

Sir Burleigh seemed very happy amongst them. He had the Gaelic something perfectly for a Southron, and he, Stuart, and Sergius seemed hugely to appreciate and enjoy the solemn dignity of the new comers—yet to foster it, partly from policy, part in that it amused themselves. Watching their faces was almost to me as though the words were distinct, so well I knew the expression of each.

Presently Kilmarnock seemed to tire of them. Gradually withdrawing, he strolled in the direction of the tents—whether he entered or no I did not observe; the rest retained their dramatic interest for me, spite of his absence. 'Twas a night, though cold, dry as summer, and wrapped warmly in a plaid, I felt no inconvenience from it. For some half-hour I sat alone, then, to my surprise, Kilmarnock came up. He did not seem to have much to say, nor did he offer any reason for having quitted the others. He looked very melancholy, and I think we

formed a very doleful pair, as he stood beside me watching the animated council below.

"Helen," said he, at length, "have you decided to leave us, to return to Leith? Is it a question of cold, of hunger, of anything you need, that I can order to be brought from Edinbro'; or aversion to this wild place, and fear of its startling-looking clansmen?"

"It is Sir Burleigh's decision," I replied, "and perhaps he is right. It was a wild scheme to bring so useless a person along with a guerilla party. Yet, when rested, I could collect brushwood for the fires, or do something to be of use. I can clean fish, even get off the hard scales of perch. I do not want to be idle."

"Is it likely we would let these white, silk hands touch brushwood, or scale fish?" said he, smiling. "That is not my meaning. We are not banishing you, but you, if you go hence, leave us truly outcast from all alleviation of our hard lot—a winter camp in the hills of the robbers."

"You have whisky," said I laughing, as Stuart of Appin, with a horn of the spirit raised in his right-hand, shouted out some toast in Gaelic, to which the noisy circle round the fire responded.

"Sir Burleigh asked me to take you to Leith,"

said Sergius, hurriedly, leaving the lighter tone in which he had commenced to speak. "I refused. Again and again he pressed me to go, and my consent was that of a man who consents to be reprieved from death, yet affects indifference to it. I thanked God that you refused to go, yet it inflicted a misery on me not to be expressed in words. I have lost your esteem. I am, in your eyes, a degraded wretch, whom to trust were madness; and, alas! it is true."

"Alas! it is not true," said I, smiling at his tragic tones. "You have not lost my esteem. I think you like to imagine you have, Sergius. Sergius, to think you fancy yourself in love with me even here, where everything is plain prose and we drink out of tin pannikins, and eat griddle-cakes! There was some excuse at the Manor—we had summer there and all scenic accessories, and I and my beauty belonged there, with all that the ease and grace of being at home bestows. I am not as handsome on these Highland hills as any red-tressed daughter of the mist who is used to them, and by moonlight I must look a poor, pale Southron, whose longings are a sea-coal fire and some beef—an object of pity, a woman who, for some inexpiable sin, has lost her only friend. See," said I, shaking down, for a whim, the long, bright waves of my burnished hair,

which gleamed golden in the moonlight, and fell to my feet around me—"see a picture of a sorceress I saw once in a book, who used to sit thus in wild, solitary places such as this, and make of her hair

'A golden net to entrap the hearts of men.'

"Every one she caught was killed to feed a famishing brood of children, hid in a neighbouring cave. I never forgot that picture—it used to haunt me, and I often fancied I could see her at dusk in the Manor woods, and would run past the lonely places in terror."

Sergius was listening without attending, his whole soul in his eyes as he gazed—the very look and attitude of the sorceress's victims in the picture. I repented my jest, and began hastily to coil up the loose tresses; yet when again safe beneath their woollen cap he seemed still enrapt in contemplation.

"A sufficiently silly picture," I said, half wrathful at this, "but my part is played; leave off looking at me. 'Tis as though an audience at a theatre stayed after the fall of the curtain."

"I beg your pardon, Helen."

"Fetch me some whisky, then. Why should Stuart of Appin drink it all on pretence of toasts? Shy! he is not shy, or he could not laugh so loudly and so long, or talk so much."

Returning with the only wine-glass we had, full of whisky, I sipped some to keep the cold away. Sergius drank the rest, and, wishing him good-night, I wandered away to our tent and was soon asleep, more comfortably this second night, as the tough stems of the branches were not felt, only occasionally a shout from the revellers round the fire broke in on or mingled with my dreams. Sir Burleigh seemed very happy amongst them, and showed against the firelight huge as Achilles.

* * * * * *

"'This must be patched
With cloth of any colour.'"

Thus half angry, half laughing, Stuart spoke, when apprised of my intended return to Leith. Of the circumstances I did not tell him one word, alleging only that Sir Burleigh was anxious for it on account of my health, fearing for the cold night mists.

"That is nonsense," said he. "To a person in sound health there is no risk in the coldest mountain air. Look at me. I suppose no one has suffered more from over-care as a boy—lapped up in rose-leaves and satin. In the hot air of Rome my Highland health has suffered the severest undermining—yet once on the hills, I am, by virtue of race, as happy as an icicle in Lapland. If

I thought for a minute it would harm you, should I wish you to remain? I am convinced it will not. You look fresh as a rose, a real Highland lass. If you return, so will I, in spite of risks. Who was to be your convoy?"

"The little Laird," said I, mendaciously.

"Then the little Laird will stay and mind his cooking. Helen, for my sake, stay. There is risk in being so near Edinbro'. Yet our plan now is to play a bold game. Those chiefs you saw us entertaining last night are greatly impressed by our presence here—our recent residence in Leith—greatly influenced by Sir Burleigh's adherence. We had a wonderful accession last night—four clans have joined, sworn on the dirk. I was wild with joy and elation, most unroyally glad of it; but if you go it will all be gloom. Who have I else to share in my bliss?"

It was after a somewhat late breakfast. We had wandered to a distance from the rest, and stood in a little hollow by the hillside, a curve which shut us from sight. The bare granite sides of the hill showed through scanty, half-leafless shrubs—under foot the dry gravel of water-washed pebbles, all of one size, or near it, attracted my curious regard. I could not look into Stuart's blue, half-angry eyes, conscious that I would gladly obey Sir Burleigh and leave him,

for a time, at any rate—my heart whispered that I was wearying of him, and conscience that I was a traitor.

He took my hand. I did not give nor withhold it, suffering it to lie coldly and passively in his. I began almost to pity him, a fatal feeling for a woman to entertain of her lover—and a thought of Kilmarnock sent a scorching blush to my face, though it was but a remembrance of his rapt look at me last night in the moonlight.

"How did you amuse yourself last evening?" said Stuart, smoothly caressing my hand, "I wondered at times whether the moonlight would tempt you to remain up, but could not leave my chiefs for a moment."

I did not answer; the blush ebbed away.

"Nay," said he, "you need not whiten. I know—I saw Sergius stroll away—I saw you on the hillside, and, by ——! the only good quality you ever had—sincerity—might spare my telling the rest. You acted—acted to further ensnare that poor wretch, who is, already, mad as a hatter. Blush!—this granite might blush for you! It was a cruel, a wicked piece of witchcraft. You are a devil, and no woman, so to poison and embitter his life!—for, with all his faults, he was your friend—ay, ten times more than you can guess."

"Not more than my gratitude to him can repay. I did nothing to wilfully hurt him."

"That is false!" said he, flinging my hand from him. "You may go to him, for me. You have a heart of stone to both, and ought to be dressed in the attire of a ——, as you are."

"I don't know what attire that may be," said I. "Since you condemn me to it, your better knowledge may help in its construction. I will ask Sir Burleigh."

"You will not frighten me with Sir Burleigh. You have asked him enough, in asking to return to Leith with Kilmarnock as guide. In my life I never imagined so wicked a wretch as you are!"

"Your imagination is, however, at fault. Casimir, you are frightfully cruel to me. Amongst these wild hills, and wild men, you are a savage."

"You appeal in vain," said he coldly. "This is probably our last dispute. I have seen the error of my belief in your love, and leave you to your wiser choice."

At this I looked at him. His eyes were stern, his lips curved and scornful.

"That is enough," said I. "And now, since it is a blow to find that even so broken a reed has failed one, leave me."

How long he had been gone I know not.

With the dreary vacuity of ideas after a heavy blow, a death, a parting, a quarrel, I sat down on a boulder on the little hillside nook, wondering, dully, why he had quarrelled with and discarded me. I thought he was indifferent to me—that I could part without regret. Newer interests had dulled my love for him; now it awoke, in pain and grievous anger at his injustice, yet in all its old strength, robbing me of resolution—of even a desire to retort this suffering upon him. I leaned my head against the granite—harder, thought I, than his heart—and heard his voice float hither and thither, in tones of hearty greeting or laughter, as he strolled and talked with the clan of chiefs who had come from their fastnesses to meet him. "That is it," suggested anger and jealousy, "a vast onward move is made; he is more secure, more haughty. The upheaval of a volcano cannot stop for a wild-flower on the mountain side—let it go, others will grow in its place. It has been a beauty and a joy. There are other joys in life; it is outworn, staled, palls on the sight."

Not in mockery this time, but in that mechanical sense of madness which seeks to relieve by any means the aching brain, I took off my cap, and loosed from their careful folds the heavy silken tresses which weighed on it.

They had another significance—beneath their veil tears could flow unseen, and thus, a wretched, forsaken, despised, and contemned miserable, I sat, oblivious of time, dreaming of what might never be—of love, of rest, of peace!

Events were hurrying on, the mighty cares and mighty business of a kingdom would soon weigh on Stuart, and crush from his heart and mind the faintest regret, the lightest visitings of compunction with respect to me. Hundreds of beautiful women would pass and repass in the charmed circle of his Court—lovely in all their nature—sweet, fresh, and fragrant with that beauty which unattainability bestows to the eyes of youth.

I should but be the *passée* Lady Clifford, the wife of a southern adherent, ridiculous by rusticity amidst the laughter-loving dames and bright youth of a Court. "That I will not be. I will not go near it," I mused vengefully. "There is the Manor. There I am supreme."

"For God's sake, Helen, weave up your hair!"

Sir Burleigh had found me out. "There is the Prince coming, with Stuart of Appin."

"We are not his bondslaves, sir." I sprang to my feet, and shook it in its golden folds behind me, putting on the *basque* cap.

"If I choose to wear it so, and you do not

object, let Stuart of Appin and that—that other, mind their own business."

"Why, sweet, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, nothing! Come for a walk with me. You are not half a mountaineer, Sir Burleigh. See, I am Queen of the Hills, and have on my golden mantle."

"It is very lovely," said he wonderingly, "and you look like a girl again, Helen."

"Am I not one, sir?" The tears gushed from my eyes—it was such ages since I had ceased to be the stately little lady of the farm. The word recalled all pain and evil that had since happened.

"Why, sweet, yes. What has disturbed you this morning?"

"Thoughts, sir; but if you will but kiss me it will all be again sunshine."

He smiled as he stooped and kissed me, and, with my hand on his shoulder, and his protecting arm round mine, we walked about, not talking much, but I consoled by his presence and love—and ready to renounce that scornful other love for ever, for this true and tender faith and patience.

The sun had risen above the mists. It was a golden day on the hills, more of summer than late autumn. Stuart and Appin had passed by another path, and we, unskilled in hill-passes,

would not risk our sunny plateau by exploring further. Yet, in spite of breezy freshness and sunshine, a chill I could not banish was at my heart. I felt as though we wandered there outcasts, that it was my fault, and the penalty unjustly fell on him.

So unhappy was I on this account—accounting myself nothing—that the very voicelessness of the grief nigh strangled me. I had rather, I felt, been the veriest condemned outcast, than caused him to suffer or to be reflected on. Yet what would outward grief avail, but to further disquiet him!

"Dear," said I, at length, "send me back to the Manor, not to Leith. You will be happy knowing I am safe—and, indeed, I am miserable here."

I stopped and clasped his arm with both my hands, the tremor and agitation of my mind making them tremble.

"It cannot be done," said he, somewhat harshly; "indeed, Leith is now out of question. To-night we have a council on—every minute of Sergius' time is taken up—and, on reflection, it was not well considered to send you so far alone. You must now await my return, Helen, and for God's sake do not disquiet me! Remember the vastness and importance of our present work

here, and let the small hardships of camping weigh less with you. It is with women that they have nothing but comfort to study, that makes its absence so felt."

"Would you have your Titians hung on the bushes?"

"Nay, sweet, I was not scolding you."

"I wish you would," I said, tearless and miserable. Then, seeing the gloom in his face, I laughed —a laugh false and hollow—yet unbetrayed in its falseness, for my floating hair hid my face from him.

"That's right," said he, getting cheerful. "I grant it is not pleasant here for you, yet you will put up with it awhile for my sake? It is not so bad."

Desperately I plunged into quick chat, relating the comforts of our hut—the amusement of watching the Laird act as cook—whilst Sir Burleigh, content that my mood had changed, forgot me in ruminating over the coming council.

"What is it to me?" thought I, desperately, when he had at length left me. "These councils are less than the rolling in of some vast wave is to a seaweed. It may displace, uproot, wreck it; yet is its existence as insignificant to itself as to the sea which unheedingly sports with its obscure destiny."

"Helen, you are getting fanciful and absurd."

I looked up with a start, hearing no step. Stuart had returned alone, and stood before me.

"Weave up your hair. I don't choose that Appin and those others should see you thus. It is very well in a picture, but——"

"Inexcusable in a picture of misery," I made answer as I wove it up. "There, you are obeyed. Now let me say that your thus trespassing on my thoughts will not readily be excused. I desire to be alone."

"I see no reason in deferring to your desire My leisure is now too scanty to stand on forms and ceremonies—dictated, too, by pique. 'Her desire shall be to him, and he shall rule over her' is sound doctrine, and, by——! I mean to rule over you with a little less laxity than of old, for you have abused my lenity, and mildness is thrown away on you. In the position you will occupy in future, moods can be allowed no part. Steadfastness in action, and, above all, in manner, *must* be preserved, or there will be no peace."

He spoke gravely, half absently. Some, to me, unknown magnificence seemed to fill his mental vision. I felt that personal petulance would fall like a jarring note on these dreams, unrealized —perchance unrealizable—yet distinct to him

as the endless Pentland Hills amongst which we stood.

"I speak in all kindness," he continued. "You are no longer the young girl whom I first met, but occupy a position in the world which calls imperatively on you for self-restraint. Lately you have given me little cause to congratulate myself on our connection, and though I might chafe at this, I took it as part of the unsettled misery attending the uncertainty of my fortunes. Now they are well-nigh assured, it is time I put my house in order, and I begin with you. It is impossible our present relations can continue if you become whimsical or petulant. A promise from you will be considered almost binding on me in social matters, and must, therefore, not be capriciously given, nor wantonly broken. In a thousand ways, unwritten yet powerful, you will be my assistant and comfort, or a baneful influence marring the sunrise of my fortunes, as you will be ruled by me, or elect your own moods and caprices."

During this lecture a thousand thoughts rushed through my mind, a turbulent and many-tinted flood of ideas, memories, regrets, anticipations.

The rose I had flung into the fire—when, half in jest, I told Sandy M'Causland I desired above

all earthly good "Fame"—recurred to me—its odour, colour, its swift extinction. Was this Fame? Had I not better have held to the beauty, colour, and perfume of lowly duties and warm affections? By now, had I been true to Alexis, I might have been the house-mother, with a loving clasp of children's arms, the sweet sound of voices, musical as falling waters, haunting the silences of my days and the solitudes of my dreams. This baneful presence, standing spirit-like before me, had lit like an eagle on my life, banishing for ever the doves which wheeled and circled round humbler hearts, and made them perpetual happiness. The cold hillside, the grey mists, were now mine for ever—lit up, perchance, by a gleam of wintry sunshine—yet as this was, a camp, not a home; a series of unrealities; a shadow of love struggling in the towering waves of ambition. Bewildered and miserable, no words would come. The power offered me had now no charm. To flee away and be at rest seemed to me, as to David, more than than a kingdom.

Stuart's cold and measured accents fell like ice on my heart—it was as though he offered me hire for my love, or reward for my devotion.

"Blessed are those that expect nothing," thought I, at length, bitterly. "He offers what

he himself prizes most, and it is my ignorance and ingratitude that should be called in question, not his judgment or munificence."

To a woman of his world, the harsh words and unloving accents would be but the creaking of a door which was opening to a heaven of delights, of splendour—her eyes would be straining beyond the present—no coldness would attach to words which prefigured the coming of power, of splendour, of rule. To me, as to the barn-door fowl in the fable, a single grain of barley were worth the most polished jewel, one accent of affection the utmost of promises.

"You will think it over," said he at length, apparently not discontented by the effect of his words, though not fathoming it; and leaving me he went swiftly down the hillside.

The heart does not think—it joys or sorrows, is elate or aching. I went on, oblivious of where the pathway led so it was to solitude, and found a tangled dell, high bare rocks surrounding it, boulders and briers its carpeting and garniture.

Truly a pretty picture I, of successful ambition—a happy exponent of princely favour, a childless mother, who, in agony, yet rejoiced that no one now had power to wound her child, that with the angels he was evermore safe, though she was alone and in darkness. I gathered some yellow-

ing leaves from a bramble, and, weaving a wreath of them, placed them on a flat stone.

"Am I going mad," thought I, retreating a little to see the effect—"offering to Rohan's memory the last gleam of my reason? I will go to sleep. That dormouse faculty remains to me unimpaired—of sleep at will—of escape from a cruel world to some unknown kinsfolk, who will soothe and cherish, medicine and restore the aching heart and tired brain."

Sitting beside the votive wreath on a lower angle of the stone, I leaned my head on my crossed arms, my face on the withering leaves, and was soon far away from oppression and contempt—in that silent world which is our refuge and our dread.

* * * * * *

Awaking, bright and happier for the rest, I arose, smoothed my hair with my hands, straightened my cap, rearranged my plaid, and began to climb the steep side of the thorny dell, making a footing of any stone or branch that afforded it, and had nearly gained the top when a pair of hands outstretched offered me aid, and lifted me some half-yard of straight, wall-like, blank stone, whose opposing had puzzled and baffled me.

"Thank you!" said I, seeing Sergius' plaid as

I landed; then, looking up, I nearly retraced my way by a single step—for to my amazement 'twas a stranger, a youth who, blushing, and cap in hand, stood before me. In all my life I had never seen so pretty a boy—his short, crisp brown hair, curled like Apollo's, his ruddy, blushing cheeks and honest grey eyes made a picture of youth very pleasant to look upon.

"I am Lord Boyd," said this Adonis; "I have come by the Prince's invitation to join my father. You are Lady Clifford, I presume?"

"Yes. Is Lord Kilmarnock with you?"

"No; he does not yet know that I have arrived."

"Does he expect you?"

"I don't know. I sent my guide on and stayed to—to—to rest awhile."

"To watch me," thought I, amused. "Well, 'twas startling to a small boy to see a witch asleep in a rocky dell. What is your name?" I asked, condescendingly.

"I am not a boy," said he, in some disdain, "my name is Beaufort." My tone of patronage and eld had hurt his boyish dignity. I laughed.

"Thank you for helping me, Lord Boyd; I hope we shall be good friends."

"Thank you!" he returned, with a graceful

bow, which was, I felt assured, in the newest style, so studied was it.

"I hope your ladyship will permit me to attend you home?"

"This is my home, milord. We are in camp, but only sleep under cover."

He smiled at remembrance of my slumber with a stone for a pillow, and together we retraced our way to the camp.

The council had not yet broken up—an eager group surrounding Kilmarnock had their heads bent to listen to a letter he read aloud—Stuart and Sir Burleigh conversed apart—at a distance the Laird and Sergius' man were cooking for their ravenous *clientèle*. We paused and looked on till, the letter read, each began its discussion with his nearest neighbour.

Stuart was the first to see us, and beckoned Boyd on. Kilmarnock, looking up, seemed for a moment as if petrified with surprise, whilst Boyd, bending his knee, kissed the Prince's hand; then rising, bowed low to Sir Burleigh, who bestowed a grim nod upon him in return. It seemed to all that he watched rather shamefacedly for his father's salutation or greeting; yet Kilmarnock welcomed him with perfect ease of manner and cordiality, watched covertly by Stuart, who went on talking to Sir Burleigh.

Appin and some of the others then claimed Boyd, who seemed relieved to escape to them.

"Here is the letter, sir"—Kilmarnock crossed to us— "Appin and the rest are all of your opinion that Adam's last promise holds out prospect of more tangible performance than usual. I trust you will not be offended at Boyd's overboldness in intruding here uninvited; it is done boy-like, but he means well, and is altogether safe and trustworthy."

"I am delighted," was the reply. "He is a fine young fellow—quite a man. What age is he?"

"Eighteen, or thereabout," was the answer, indifferently given, as he turned his stern dilated eyes on the group to whom Boyd was now chatting animatedly in Gaelic.

"He is a handsome lad," said Sir Burleigh, "and looks older."

Then they resumed their interrupted discussion, and I walked away with Kilmarnock.

"Helen," said he abruptly, when out of hearing of the others, "this is the second time he has insulted me. Can you expect patience and devotion to last?"

"Do not call Lord Boyd's coming an insult," said I. "He is charming, and should be welcome whoever sends him."

"It is an insult, by ——!" said he. "Boyd is very well, as boys go, but how dare he decoy him here? No, I'll not put up with everything —my family shall not be meddled with, or whistled here and there by anyone on any pretence."

He sat wrathfully down, ruminating over the Prince's iniquity in inviting Boyd to the camp.

"Yes, yes; 'tis very well for you," he exclaimed impatiently. "You are ignorant of his mean motive—of the danger to a lad in coming here. I know both."

"What possible motive can he have but to please you?" said I, teasingly—knowing well enough, however.

"It does not please me," He coloured angrily, looking as like Boyd as their dissimilar age would allow.

"Oh, well, be content," said I, "it pleases me. I like a pretty boy to talk to, 'twill remind me of Rohan—grown up."

"You will not have your plaything long. To-night I send him home."

"How cruel, how unnatural!"—I took his hand—"Sergius, you cannot, he is so pleased to be here; besides, he is not a boy to be bandied about like that. You will offend him. Think of your own feelings, when you were young."

The angry colour in Kilmarnock's face deepened.

"I had not such a happy youth," he said bitterly. "I was never free to seek a fairy princess, but bound ere I knew what the world held of charm and pleasure. Boyd shall not suffer so as has been my lot—he shall be free, the world all before him."

"Except this camp," said I.

Sergius laughed, spite of himself.

"Well," said he, his glance relenting as he looked to the far-off group, where Boyd, flushed and happy, sat enchaining the attention of the older men, "he may stay the night in camp. But, only lest I show anger, and so gratify malice, come and show me where you met, Helen. I have been in these hills often enough, yet never met a beautiful woman."

"The ages grow wiser, meeting all that is beautiful instead of flying from it. Here is where we met."

We had gained the dell but a few yards from the camp, though approached by many windings. A solitary spot it seemed. The wreath of dead leaves lay there. Absently Sergius took them, examined the form of the chaplet, then replaced it on the stone.

"Helen," said he, "the end of this struggle

is now not far off. Better so. I could not outlive another year of the intense wear, the tension of thought devolving on me through it. God knows, had I any reward to hope for, any gratitude or appreciation in the present, it would lighten my labours ; as it is, I simply toil on, overweighted, unthanked, harassed, and miserable."

"Do no not say so." I felt tears in my eyes. "He will come to his right mind when he is happy and settled, and be shocked at having hurt or grieved you. Own that the tension on his mind is as great. He has much to harass him."

"And time for schoolboy tricks, for small malice," Sergius half-choked with choler, "for acts designed to render me ridiculous, for interference the most unwarrantable."

"But you are so wise," said I. "He comes of a race renowned for its vindictive spirit. You have offended him, and he avenges it—as you say, in rather a schoolboy manner for his years. Yet see his cruelty to me. I suppose complaint is futile. He is as he is made."

The grey afternoon mist came up, stealing ghost-like around the boulders in the little dell. Sergius sat pale and silent, thinking. An impulse to comfort him came upon me—only that sympathy with a friend, a comrade, which is as apart from passion or love as snow is from fire.

He was hardly used, was grieved, angry—why should not I, who felt indignant for him, console him, as he counted it consolation, with a kind word?

"A kiss!" said he beseechingly. "I live from one while to another on a kiss from you. I will be friends again, Helen, with him if you will kiss me. It is not much to grant, and why should I work, galley-slave fashion, for nothing?"

"Who appointed me paymaster?" said I laughing, and evading his outstretched hands. "Whenever you are grieved or angry you adjourn to some remote dell or rocky fastness and claim a kiss, as if I was your mother."

"Helen!"

"You do, truly. It's grown into habit. I don't think you know how absurd it is."

"Helen!"

"You think I am a protocol, or a treaty, or promise from Adam."

"Helen, I am unhappy."

"There, then, just one. Ethically, of course, 'tis as bad as a thousand—yet take it."

"Ethically," said he, as he took half-a-dozen—and the dinner bell, or rather whistle, sounding, we betook ourselves back to the camp, both laughing.

In the early stages of the dinner Boyd be-

haved with great modesty and decorum, feeling his father's eye upon him—praised the crayfish soup; deferred to Appin, who liked, despite his shyness, to lay down the law; told one or two anecdotes of the students, well and concisely; and then, taking some particularly heady champagne, became lively, and was heard—in a solemn pause—to tell Appin of a place renowned amongst the students in Edinbro', which, as he explained, was popular because "They could do what the devil they liked there!"

Sir Burleigh looked grim, and Stuart signed to Appin to silence him. Kilmarnock went on with his dinner calmly, as though to say, "His faults be on the heads of his inviters."

"Be quiet, mon," said Appin in a loud aside, "ye were best withdraw. It is no' a student meetin', an' there's a leddy present."

"Yes," said he loudly, "Lady Clifford. I have seen her sleeping, an' very handsome she is. My father is—hic—sweet on her—so is Prince Charlie—so am I."

Appin started to his feet, and by main strength dragged him away to the distant tents, loudly demanding to know why he could not finish his dinner in peace.

A buzz of indifferent talk arose to cover this

startling occurrence. Stuart was laughing covertly. Several of the chiefs, who understood but little English, had not caught the sense of his rapid, excited utterance. Sergius took no apparent notice of it. Dinner over, however, and all breaking up into groups, strolling around by moonlight, he came to Sir Burleigh and expressed deep regret at his son's misconduct, which was civilly received.

"I know, I know," said Sir Burleigh, "we were students ourselves. The sight of a pretty woman, a glass of wine, was enough in those days to put us beside ourselves. Send the lad home, is my advice."

"Be sure of it," said Sergius bitterly; and later on he was started off a prisoner, with two runners to see him safe to Leith—completely sober and very penitent—Sergius having, doubtless, parental fashion, given him a "good screed of doctrine" to meditate by the way.

The next day a threatened change in the weather caused an onward move to our company. We had to go where, if rain, as it promised, should fall heavily, we could be securely sheltered. The tents resisted both cold and mist, but would succumb to a heavy downpour; so they were struck, and several men sent on with them to the caves, carrying also all cooking vessels.

The caves were but insignificant hollows in the hillsides, some mile or two from our first camp. The largest of them—for they were numerous—was kept as a meeting room, and each person could have two or more of the smaller ones at pleasure. The earthen floors were damp and dirty, the interiors dark and full of gloom and shadows.

The tents, folded, were placed on the ground under the beds, to raise them and keep them from the damp. Two men worked hard cutting brushwood for beds, and piled mine so high as to defy any fear from damp floors. I looked into several other of the dens, and in one saw Sergius busily digging a hole.

"What is that for?" I called, startling him into rising so hastily that he knocked his head against the low roof.

"Come in," said he ruefully, rubbing his head.

"Well, what is it for?"

"For the dispatches," said he, showing a square tin box. "My bed will be placed over them, and I shall lie brooding over state papers enough to—— I wish they were in your tent!"

"Cave," I corrected. "Why?"

"I should be a better statesman, longing to be near my dispatches, uneasy at the separation."

"Go on digging."

"Oh! there's time in plenty; 'tis but peaty soil, easily dug."

"Are you digging with your hands?"

"Yes; why not? what are hands for?" He again went on his knees, and recommenced his scraping up of the light soil.

"You are like a dog burying a bone," said I, I will come in again when it is buried."

Turning to leave the darksome little cave, I met Stuart bringing in some letters, apparently for the box.

"Well!" said he, "assisting at the funeral? Sergius, here is Adam's last letter, take special care of it."

Adam was the King of France, and this letter, promising a more definite and extended support, had to be read and interpreted separately to each wavering chieftain—the great seal on it, with the arms of France, doing as much, perhaps, as its contents in helping on their belief in its potency. For the most part they were proud, illiterate men, though shrewd, brought up by some dependent tutor, who dare as soon chastise a lion cub in the lion's den, as exert too great authority to compel obedience. Yet, even this scant introduction to learning was seized and magnified by their all-devouring pride; and not

one but would fearlessly, at the head of his clan, have marched to Edinbro' and claimed a professorship, had his taste lain that way—so Kilmarnock told me.

"Come, Helen," said Stuart, after watching for a minute his minister digging on hands and knees, "we are in the way here."

I went out with him, and we visited Sir Burleigh's cave, who was irascibly demanding of the Laird why he had taken the largest one for a kitchen, cramming him into a Procrustean den, too short for him.

"Mon alive," said the Laird, carrying in his kettle, "'tis aught fit lang at the least. Ye are na ower sax feet four or five, which leaves a gude half yaird to stretch in."

This arithmetic, or our coming, consoled Sir Burleigh, who was very careful to cover every inch of the place he designed for his bed with the thick leather of his tent. I helped him arrange the branches and heather.

"You can share this," said he. "I cannot have you alone in another cave."

"Very well," I agreed, "I will fetch my share of branches," and dragging in my leather carpet, I fixed up a dainty dormouse-like nest in the opposite corner, whereat he laughed loudly.

"You never looked better," said I, regarding

him as we emerged from the den. "The air of these hills must be wonderful, and the exercise agrees with you. It drives gout far off. I wish we were shepherds, I don't like houses after this."

"It is new to you, sweet, but I have camped often enough, and hope this is my last experience of it. No matter, 'tis in a good cause, and, so my damask rose is happy, I ought to be content."

Stuart had wandered away, but now returned, and, catching sight of the interior of our cave, smiled.

"Come and see mine," said he. "Saunder has made it trim as a bower."

In effect, the floor was thickly strewn with heather, the bed raised and covered with a plaid, a cushion covered with deerskin as pillow, and two swords crossed fixed on the wall above it; while on a flat stone, as table, stood a couple of wax candles and writing material. A deep trench was dug before it, with a canal to conduct the water down the hillside, should it rain heavily.

"Good thought," said Sir Burleigh, seizing the rusty claymore with which Saunder had been digging, "I must do this for our tent." He went off and began digging carefully.

"Come in out of the drizzle," said Stuart.

"Good God! do you hesitate? This is not the Rubicon. I say you shall. You are treating me infamously. I never get a word with you, while Sergius can hardly shake you off. Witness just now."

"This accusation has become chronic with you," I say indignantly. "Why did you insist on my coming here—where of necessity no one can absolutely avoid another—and then reproach me because I will not insult Sergius by a rigid avoidance? For the rest, your suspicions are unfounded. I do not haunt him."

"Well, well, I know they are; in my soul I could not breathe the same air with him else. Yet why not avoid the appearance, Helen? *allégresse* is out of place in you, and tortures me."

"I will return to Edinbro'," say I, hardily, "a woman is out of place here, and whatever I do or say is here more liable to misinterpretation, even in this limited circle, where all are old friends. I like the hills—even wintry weather, fogs and cold, can be happiness; but I do not like the bitterness of your doubts, the constant wearing anxiety of your unjust misconstruction makes me miserable."

"What, then, of the constant torture you inflict? By——! when sometimes I see you with

Sergius, it is no figure of speech to say my blood boils. The noise of its rush sounds in my ears like the sea. I could strike my dirk to the hearts of both; so, Madam, advise yourself, is your amusement worth so much?"

"I came in to see your tent," said I, "not to listen to unjust lectures."

"Unjust! Granted that you are blind. Do I know Sergius for years, to be mistaken now? I suffer that, through your friendship with him, might move a fiend to pity. Kilmarnock knows and works for it, deliberately torturing me through my love for you. Can you doubt that what a man of his intellect resolves on, is unsparingly done to a rival?—yes, he has constituted himself that—and what I most blame you for is tacitly allowing a sort of claim on your regard. You are ignorant of such men. To me they are a daily experience. A Court is a school of psychology; in it, to live, one must use the subtlest analysis. Men walk masked, and the mask so well worn as to become part of them; yet, of Sergius might have been writ: 'Oh, how hast thou with jealousy affected the sweetness of affiance! Show men dutiful, grave, learned, noble, constant in spirit. Why so didst thou?' Yet see, it is almost incredible, this treason to me. I allow his intellect, which was what first

charmed me to so close friendship with him —the subtilty of his wit, the warmth of his regard. He has favourites, too, this Scotch Iago, for whom he would regardlessly lay down his life. He has honour—intellectual honour—of the soul's honour he knows nothing. I am not immaculate, yet would perish ere I would do the things he will calmly justify. And to such a man I am to stand by and see you going, as surely as a bird to the snake, without a word? He fascinates you, that you cannot deny, and you have enthralled him, not only by your beauty—though he is fastidious and a voluptuary—but chiefly by your talent, wit, and a certain naturalness of art, which appeals to him as its highest development. Beware of him! He will serve a year for you, and lose no minute of the time. Promise me to avoid him, not of necessity openly; yet promise, as you love me, to believe in this warning."

"Don't psychologize," said I, "I am no world's wonder to be a prize for such consummate art and villainy. You have dreamed most of this. It is worthy of the Medici at their worst. Poor Sergius would be astonished if he knew how gifted he was in your eyes."

"It is no jest to me," said he sadly. "The net is spread for you, and you are fluttering about

it. Now you are warned. Can you deny its truth?"

I shivered. A violent feeling in Kilmarnock's favour made my heart beat, yet not with a wish to defend him from these grave charges. Were they true? If so, and his friendship for me was but a development of refined sensuality, how truly had I incurred Stuart's just wrath by apparently, of my own volition, entangling myself in the net of this *retiari?* If but imagined, through hate of a possible rival, yet was I not blameless—since a little injustice from his master had been the worst consequence, if I had not strove to soften it, to bestow the balm of pity, to hold out the hand of friendship; and by so doing fostered false hopes, raised illusions, rendered family ties tasteless, and quenched the happy light of home affections, as a conflagration will that of a lamp.

"Will you give him up?" said Stuart palely. "I do not ask impossibilities, you may still be outward friends. Helen, I ask as for my life, that you will believe me—your own heart must confirm the truth of what I have said—and give up Kilmarnock; it is for your own good. Answer me."

"I—I cannot," said I, my heart beating violently. "You do not know, you—you may misjudge him."

"Helen"—he took me in his arms—"I have no eloquence, only sincere and faithful love for you. I have no art, my faults are patent to you, I am unworthy of you; yet, on my soul, I swear it is of you alone I think in thus warning you. Can you find no corroborative witness in your heart? Has he kept to friendship? Has he not made one stepping-stone after another of every circumstance that occurs? Does he ever go *back*? Grant that a man may make an ill-considered avowal, be betrayed into an unusual current of feeling, of emotion. It is like the stealthy, onward move, which may stop, yet never recedes; the rising of an ebbless tide, soundless, soothing, yet inexorable, which images Sergius' feeling for you. It has come upon me within these few days like a revelation. Before, I was inclined to resent it as an ill-considered passion for mere beauty. Now it is a fixed, settled purpose, a will, a resolution of iron. It helps him on to be at variance with me; your sympathy for supposed injustice tempers you to his hand, and he is not slowly moulding you to his will. Helen, you will madden me. It is worse than I thought. You dare, after all my warning and entreaty, stand there and justify Kilmarnock?"

"Not the man you imagine, the monster you

have allowed your thoughts to fashion; but Sergius as he is, a true friend—to you, a devoted partizan. One who sets in the balance for you all his earthly hopes; risks life, wife, children, riches, peace, happiness, and in return gets basest suspicion. That my beauty, such as it is, moves him, is to say a rose might win passing approval from a philosopher, yet to credit Sergius with treason is to deserve that he should turn traitor."

So saying, in wrath I left the cave, and, overbold with a consciousness of severe justice, sought out Sergius, who had finished his digging, and stood, stately as Achilles, at the door of his tent.

"What is the matter?" said he kindly. "You look angry as the witch in the fable:

> 'Know that my favourite squirrel's lost!
> Search—for I'll have creation torn
> If he's not found before the morn.'"

"Once in a while one is inclined to such extreme measures for a trifling cause," I rejoined, as the context shows, where:

> 'Jove, with a bolt revengeful, red,
> Struck the detested monster dead.'

Surely a taste for squirrels was here too severely dealt with?"

"Thunderbolts, ultimatums, and such like weapons, frighten more than they hurt," he said,

smiling. "It is only in fables they are mortal. Is Sir Burleigh digging a grave yonder? I have been watching him this long time."

"Come and see," said I, going on in advance.

Reaching our cave, I found that Sir Burleigh had cleverly constructed quite a miniature canal some nine inches broad, and so neatly finished that, unless very heavy, rain could not wash down the sides of it.

Sergius laughed at it unsparingly.

"This is very well," said he, "but a yard or so is soon filled up. Time flies—give me the claymore, sir, I will finish it."

"In good time," was the reply, "I am tired of it, nor should have persevered so long, but that I was thinking of other things."

"Work away," said I to Sergius, "the labourer is worthy of his hire—dinner is nearly ready."

"Is your own home trenched?" inquired Sir Burleigh, pausing as he was about to enter ours.

"Sufficiently," was the answer, whereas it was not done at all.

Sir Burleigh threw himself heavily on the bed. I looked at him surprised—he had no taste for indolence, and had scarcely earned such an indulgence by the amount of his work.

"Helen," said he, motioning me to sit beside

him, "it was not the wisest thing to do for me to stoop so much."

"What is the matter?" I asked, alarmed.

"Nothing much, sweet; it will soon pass."

I looked at him, thoroughly frightened—his eyes were closed, his lips quivered, the veins on his broad forehead were swollen, tears forced themselves from under his closed lids. My first fear, of apoplexy, passed.

"Tell me," I whispered, as I knelt beside him and laid my hand softly on his brow, "what is it, dear?"

"I dare not," he muttered. "Helen, you will hate me. I am now nothing—nothing. A ruined partizan of a feeble cause. The Manor is confiscated—the Manor you loved. Oh, my God! we are well done by to have a hole in the hillside. Oh! Helen—Helen!"

"The Manor!" I sobbed in extremity of distress—it was a sharp pain to me—"how cruel, how wicked! I hate——"

"Do not say it!" said Sir Burleigh, imploringly. "I deserve it, but do not you say it, Helen Rohan!"

"Say what?" said I, wonderingly. "I do hate ——"

"For God's sake wait awhile, Helen! You cannot unsay it; it will cling to me——"

"Let it!" said I, fiercely, rising. "I hate the Hanover Hog! I hate him! Now, sir, forgive my disobedience! I do hate him! Oh, the Manor, the Manor! It cannot be! All the beautiful oak trees, the lake, the Farm—but I will love you for all, dear. Oh, Sir Burleigh, I am only afraid of one thing, only one—that you had rather I had gone—died—disappeared—never come into your life—than lost the Manor. If you think so, do not say it. Me or the Manor, would you have chose the Manor first?"

"No, my dear, you first, you before all—even life! and I have you, sweet. That is what you mean?"

"Yes. I, too, loved it, but so long as you are safe it may go. You are the Manor, dear Sir Burleigh!"

"M'Causland," said he, "has gone to France with what he could collect. He, I hear, took the most of the plate and pictures. Janet and Craig went with him. Old Elsie and Elizabeth he provided for, and sent to their friends some weeks since."

"I hope he took the blue china," said I, "I don't want German pigs to feed from it, a trough is too good for *them*."

"Uncurl your pretty lips," said he. "The day we started, he and Janet began to pack up

quietly, so no doubt but little you value is left behind. They got clear away. There, my darling, is a crumb of comfort—he is safe."

"Would he have been endangered, sir?"

"Certainly he would. Known to be my confidential steward, he had been in prison ere now."

I was aghast. The whole magnitude of the business dawned on me with this disclosure. Not only rich, powerful men ran risks, but poor people, who had, perhaps, no means of flight, of defence. I was glad of Craig and of Janet's safety, of M'Causland's cautious withdrawal, which would, I knew, be inimitably well managed; of his having thought of me with regard to the pictures. I knew he had relations in France, and was, doubtless, safeguarded with letters from the Jacobites to adherents there.

All this was very well, yet was but an anodyne; the pain returned—the bitter loss of our home, the breaking-up for ever of its calm influence on our lives. Comforting Sir Burleigh as well as I could, I yet wept myself asleep. Many scenes flitted through my excited brain. In all of them the Manor held a place; either I was going or coming, in the study, by the lake, at the Farm, but always with Sir Burleigh, and always loving him, with an intensity that was almost pain. I

awoke sobbing, having dreamed he had disappeared into the Hall and forbidden me to follow.

"Oh, you are cruel!" I explained, as he dried my tears. "You went away from and waved me back. Oh, never do so, Sir Burleigh. Let me go with you. Promise——"

"It is dinner-time," said he, speaking in a harsh voice; but tears were in his eyes, and, hastily dressing for the meal—so, as we always did—we came out hand-in-hand, like two cave-dwellers, to some strange city—bewildered. I sat by him with a downward face—close beside him—not speaking, not thinking, but feeling, in a blind, groping way, all that the Manor had been to my life—and to his. It was like losing a limb and feeling for it ceaselessly. There was little speech, save in Gaelic amongst the one or two chiefs present, and dinner had not long been done when the first of the rain came down, and, hand-in-hand, we returned to our cave—to our dreams and our silence.

In the morning I was first awake, and stood beside the rough couch, mournfully regarding Sir Burleigh. A little touch had come to him in the night—indeterminate in that one could not say where he had changed, yet as though Time's wing had lingered over his face and left an in-

effaceable shadow. He slept. I was glad of that. I moved softly out of the cave and wandered away alone.

The sun was touching the hilltops with pale gold; no traces of the rain remained among us. Lower down would be swamps and morasses; here the porous soil had swallowed it all and was surface dry. I found, not far off, a lonely little tarn, where I washed, and, the water subsiding, used it as a mirror to arrange my hair. The comparison brought before me the large, fragrant, cedar-scented rooms at the Manor, with the steel mirrors, the stately hall with its bannerets, now hatefully occupied by aliens—by German pigs, I muttered vengefully. I could have taken a dirk gladly, and cut all their throats sleeping; sinking them, lead-weighted, in the dark lake, never to reappear to trouble our peace, to profane our Clifford woods—haunts of love, memory, sorrow, and youth. Strange the thought of M'Causland did not trouble me—later on, later on! The Manor and its memories now held all my thoughts.

"Is its master awake?" I hurried back. He still slept, though the little camp was astir. The noise of my entrance (though I made no noise) awoke him. I knelt beside and kissed him.

"That is enough, Helen," said he irritably, "I

am not a baby to be soothed by caresses. Helen, that villain Verney's got it."

"You don't mean it! Oh! Sir Burleigh, do not mislead me. Oh! how delightful—not a German. Oh! sir, get up, let us sing or do something. Only Verney! Oh! Sir Burleigh, I must kiss you. I brought in twenty kisses, they are growing out there like mushrooms after the rain."

"That is not twenty," said he, as I stopped out of breath at the tenth.

"The rest are for Verney," said I, "for being clever enough to keep out the Gadarenes. Oh! it is too—too good."

"Am I never to get up, with your kisses and rubbish?" he growled. "Helen, you will smother me."

"I can't help it. Only Verney—and you love me still, sir? Look at the morning, it is bright. We will be victors, and then Verney will swear, for we will turn him out again. 'An Order in Council was issued this day,' and all that. What does it matter that he is there while we are away? Dear old Verney, he cannot gamble it away; the roof is swear-proof, and he hates pictures; besides, the seven best Titians are safe at Stellarig."

So saying, I helped Sir Burleigh dress, brought

him in a bowl of fresh water for washing, and combed his short, thick, grey hair with my silver pocket-comb.

"You look lovely!" said I. "Dogberry was right—losses ennoble a man. What is a great, fat, prosperous citizen like, who never knew hunger, thirst, pain, despair or losses—is he like you?"

"What is a witch like?" said he, straining me to his heart. "I thought you would hate me, for you loved the Manor."

"No, no; you are bribing me for kisses. You could not think so. I love you. You are the Manor. Seeing you anywhere, all the best of the Manor comes with you. Now breakfast is ready, sunshine is everywhere. We will win, and remonstrate with Verney by turning him out again."

After breakfast, Stuart, who had been very silent, and was pale and troubled, took possession of Sir Burleigh, walking up and down with him for a long time, using his old familiar caress of placing his hand on Sir Burleigh's shoulder—coaxing, expostulating, sympathizing.

"You are both alike," I heard Sir Burleigh say. "Helen has persuaded me it is nothing. It is my birthplace. I tell you it is a blow that no softening will save the pain of."

"But a temporary one, sir; do not give me the pain of seeing you unhappy about it. Losses made for me affect me more than you imagine. I can but give my life in battle to win it back, my gratitude now. We have our losses, too, Sir Burleigh."

Sir Burleigh could not resist an appeal by Stuart, and was presently much comforted. It was not considered necessary to enlighten the few chiefs as to this blow. They could not after prove that we knew it, being so far off from the scene, from gazettes and news; and Verney Clifford holding it made it all the same to them in name. We could not afford to enlighten them at this time. It would have been madness to attempt to explain that the big Southron chief, Sir Burleigh, was shorn of his land and estates, even for the cause. Pity is justly supposed to lower the object of it when it becomes a mere sentiment—as an individual experience it may raise.

"It was not entirely unforeseen," confessed Sergius to me. "I do not mean as a general risk, but as an almost certainty, so soon as Sir Burleigh came north; but the effect on the chiefs here has fully indemnified us."

"It is very likely, sir."

"Are you not one of us, Helen? and Sir

Burleigh, has he acted in utter ignorance whither all this tended? No matter, you shall be back at the Hall ere another year is out, be content, sweet. Do not be angry with me. Remember I warned you—offered to beg off Sir Burleigh on your account, and you would not. Verney Clifford's got it for the present. He is red-hot Hanover now—let him see a few kilts among the oak trees, a few claymores flashing in the Hall, we shall see how long he remains Hanover. That is to happen, believe me. How did Sir Burleigh take it?"

"Very well, with true courage—only feared the effect of its loss on my love for him; but I love him for himself. Sir Burleigh a beggar, I would carry an almsdish to help him. Try and give him hope of its recovery—it is so sudden."

"You are his best hope, Helen; were I Sir Burleigh, I would be content, having you, to want everything."

"You have Lady Margaret," I suggested, to damp this enthusiasm for his friend's wife, which did not appear to him to wear an undecaloguish aspect, so gravely he said it—"and Lord Boyd. Were I some years older and freckled, you would want to change for some other fair Rosamond."

"Helen," said he reprovingly, "a hundred years would not change me."

"An odd little old couple we should look then," quoth I, laughing; "but that is not the question. Go, sweet Sergius, for my sake—and pile Pelion on Ossa in hopes to Sir Burleigh. I cannot bear him to be hurt or grieved. Promise me!"

"Our success is assured, Helen. No better hope could be. I will, however, assure him so, unmistakably, myself. Not just now—regret must have reasonable scope for its indulgence. Grief will never kill Sir Burleigh. Why was I not born a Clifford? Life is little more to me now than a dull torture—a Tantalus thirst. All the past has receded, the future spreads before me like a desert—dry, arid, relentless—yet with a mirage on it that to me seems real."

"That too, will pass. Why, milord, will you dwell on such thoughts? I have been indulgent to you in the hope that time would dissolve these mirages you cherish, or at least leave out the central figure; filling them with the delight of remembered peace, of happy anticipation for the future, of reunion with Lady Margaret, and delight in Boyd. I am but human, and when I am told I foster illusion, and strive to wreck your life, may I not remonstrate with you—not

claiming to be worthy a thought you bestow on me, but in your own best interests, for your own peace's sake? Why will you not be my friend simply, as you used? 'Tis but an effort of will, and these phantasies will exist no longer."

"Granted," said he fiercely. "The will that wills to part with life—that lets out the ache and anguish of the heart in its life-blood. Helen, you are but a woman. You cannot tell what I feel, what I suffer. Not once—it is a continuous, steady torture. Yet, coward like, I will not die—for there I might not see you, hear your voice, touch your hand. Helen, do not reproach me with conventional words and phrases. I am in the net and the snare. Would to God I were free, free among the dead, free any way, from this pain!"

We were now beside the tarn, small, still, and deep, made yet darker by the rain-water flowing into it through peat. Sergius knelt beside it, and, baring his arms, dipped them, elbow-deep, into the cold water, finally throwing aside his bonnet and bathing his head and face.

"I know you will pardon me," said he, more cheerfully. "I have had a sleepless night over this news, and we must presently to Council, where a cool head is necessary. Keep Sir Burleigh away for a while. The terms in which we

must discuss this are—are a departure from the strict letter of truth; and, in short, our chiefs must have it cooked to suit Northern palates. A terrible confession, Lady Clifford. Such is statecraft."

"Sir Burleigh will understand that too," I affirmed. "He is not likely to be reassured by exclusion from a Council. To him it may seem that loss of lands is loss of weight, even to his best friends. If he is shut out I will persuade him to return to Edinbro'. No statecraft shall excuse his not being consulted in everything, least of all just now."

"'I'll no swaggerers,'" laughed Sergius. "'Feel, masters, how I shake.' Why, you little scold, it is to save him an explanation that will be a trial to him. But be it as you will. No disrespect was even thought of."

"He must go all the same, milord. It would, at least, look like exclusion; and if the explanation is unpleasant it will be your fault, for which I will never forgive you."

"Helen," said he, laughing heartily, "it will, fortunately, be in Gaelic, or, despite good will, I must offend. See that black-bearded fellow, Appin, strutting about with the Prince. He would leave us at a word of this. So, my darling, let me work it my own clumsy way. Sir

Burleigh shall come and even approve. I must go now and call them to Council.

"I will remain," said I, despondently, sitting beside the tarn, as, lifting his bonnet, he walked away.

His appearance was a signal for the rest to gather round the embers of the fire, and a loud-voiced clack of tongues ensued, in Gaelic.

I saw Sir Burleigh sitting despondently amongst them. Stuart frequently spoke to him, without the effect of shaking off his passive attitude. I knew, better than any mere man could tell, how much he would have felt the best intentioned exclusion, and waited anxiously during the long discussion for its ending, when I could approach and comfort him. At length it was over. Sergius came up with him. Sir Burleigh, with rather a melancholy smile, professed himself tired. "It is an hour to luncheon," said he, taking out his watch. "If you are not tired, Kilmarnock, take Helen a walk. She has been crouched up here, gipsy-fashion, this long time."

In silence Sergius offered his hand. I would have refused, but that my voice and eyes were full of tears, and I would not add to his melancholy.

We walked on awhile in silence. "Helen,"

said he at length, "this is childish in both of you. I am surprised that he shows no more fortitude."

"You would not be surprised," I said, the tears fast falling, "if you had known no other home, no other interests for a lifetime, and, losing it, felt your friends could blow hot and cold at a moment, as he has been made to feel."

"You are unjust," he said simply, "and angry; grief is blind. You will recover it, be sure. I did not expect to be accused of falling off in friendship, for one."

"It is Appin, then," said I querulously. "I saw him rise without a glance at Sir Burleigh, and walk away."

"Why, sweet," said he, "Appin never looks at anyone—he is shy, or so reputed. Now, Helen, stop this nonsense. It is unlike you. If I were rich as Sir Burleigh, the Manor would not weigh with me. He has over a hundred thousand pounds in French securities, besides other monies here in Edinbro'. Were we the venal wretches you picture, we had still a civil word for our big ally. Is it not disgraceful to accuse an honest man to his face of such miserly meanness? Sweet banker's wife, I kiss your hand—were you a beggar, I would bring the few thousands I

possess and pour them a-heap at your feet. By —— ! I wish you were."

"What would become, then, of Boyd and Peggy?" said I, still lachrymose and inclined for expostulation

Kilmarnock laughed harshly.

"Helen," said he, "have you ceased, with your changed fortunes, to consider my feelings?"

"I beg your pardon," said I palely; "I beg Lady Kilmarnock's also—tell her if you will; she will know that I need no other punishment."

We were standing near an overhanging rock. The shame of my face at my stupid and inadvertent remark consumed me. I had mentally called her "Peggy" often enough, yet for the world would not have so offended with my tongue, so justified a stern rebuke. I felt distressed, nearly to fainting. The whole morning had been spent in mental corrosion, in misery. This might have spared me the shame of an angry reproof for an unconsidered levity of tongue, which I was far from meaning. The poet who wrote of

> "Self-contempt bitterer to drink than blood,"

might have seen me standing there, shrinking and cowering.

"My dear Helen," said he, "forgive me! See,

I am on my knees; don't make me feel like a brute."

A sharp pain at my heart prevented a reply. Was it for this I had forgiven him so often?

"Helen," said he, rising, "I like a woman to be perfect, to have exquisite perceptions, and you are so; yet as we exclaim at a flaw in a diamond, so any crudeness from you is most noted. I was a savage and a brute—forget it."

"It was deserved," I say trembling, "though I but jested," and hurrying away from him I gained our cave.

"This will not do," I muttered, panting and breathless, "Sergius' anger need not so affect me."

Sir Burleigh came in wearily, and I smiled as cheerfully as I could, though my lips quivered, more at sight of him than at my own hurt feelings.

"It is near lunch time," said he, "and no water here to wash our hands."

I took the tin bowl and went wearily up to the tarn, finding him on my return searching among his things for a clean handkerchief.

"Here, sir." I produced one I had washed out. I also washed another, which the Laird dried by his fire.

"Good girl," said he, as we went out together. "Suppose we were beggars, Helen?"

"But we are not; and if we were—but we are not. We will therefore think of more cheerful things. Do you know I called Lady K. "Peggy" by mistake, and Sergius was vexed. I truly did not mean it."

"And if you did," said he hotly, "Peggy McGregor was her name. How dare Sergius take offence and annoy you for such a trifle?"

"He is like Death in the story of Kildare, sir, he dare do what he will; but Peggy or not, she is freckled."

"Of course she is, and d——d ugly. Never mind Sergius, he thinks there is not such another woman in the world—the most constant fellow I know, and if he is a bit Puritanical so much the better; don't call her 'Peggy' again, Helen, if it annoy him."

"I will not," I promised—and having got him to talk on indifferent matters, I kept it up, weaning his mind from its sad thoughts, till by evening, a comforting dispatch having come in meanwhile, he was ready to eat a good dinner, and the parlous first day of loss was over, the painter cut, and the Manor drifting into the limbo of the past, as our life there had already done.

* * * * * *

The Medician view of Kilmarnock with which Stuart had half-frightened me, nearly disappeared

now, so kind and sympathetic he showed himself to Sir Burleigh, whose mental anxiety caused a slight attack of gout, not to be remedied in that wild place, save by patience. So hour by hour, when off duty, Sergius would sit and talk to him, and warmth being essential he had to keep within the scooped cave.

Stuart compared them to the Cyclops and Ulysses, yet took care the comparison should go no farther than to me. His eyes twinkled over it, and I began to see that if ever he reigned he would be a wit to his courtiers, and told him so.

"Tush! tush!" said he. "Fie, what malice is in the feminine mind! You will try for a monopoly, and none will know how justly to apportion praise, yet secretly and unfairly incline to you, because you have that wise, Greek look and cannot be suspected of trifling. What a beautiful woman you are, and how wicked!"

He spoke moodily. I asked what illusion held him now. We were sitting beside the tarn; my hand, reddened by dabbling into the deep brown water, was cold. I withdrew it, and to punish him, seized his long fingers in a chill clasp. He gazed into my eyes, all the laughter gone from his.

"Had we never met," he went on, gloomily, "I had missed the star of my life. Yet twilight,

or even darkness, is sometimes to be preferred to a bale-fire."

"I never thought of myself in that light," I laughed. "Give me time. A bale-fire! Why not call me a rat, a cat, a hog, or a dog? I like intelligible metaphor, and hate secondhand, musty metaphysics." I splashed a little water in his face, which he allowed to remain, like erratic tears.

"That is," said he, "how you baffle expectation. You look like a spirit—only fairer—and behave like a *dame du monde*."

"Would you, then, have me, like Ancient Pistol, always

'Speaking of Africa and golden joys'?"

"Africa is not now far off, Helen, but the joy is vanishing out of my life. Day by day I see lessening your love for me—hour by hour the strange influence of Sergius overrules it. Yet you deny that it is so."

The depression of his tone, his anxious and careworn look, assured me that he was taking very much to heart my supposed infatuation for Kilmarnock. I was terribly embarrassed. To treat it seriously meant an immediate and fatal break to Sergius' friendship for both—just when it was imperative that nothing should mar the superhuman efforts he was making in his master's

cause—was to break off all chance of restoring him, by patience and friendship, to his better self—of calming down the delirium of passion to rational friendship, which, I was convinced, was but a work of time and tender treatment. Yet how could I treat lightly an appeal or accusation of so grave a nature; which, moreover, had that irritating basis of truth which is enough to mislead yet does not enlighten? Had another been the subject of it, I could have taken in the whole situation; explained, soothed, justified, allayed unfounded suspicion; convinced by close reasoning, and preached patience, forbearance.

Just now the depression caused by the confiscation of the Manor, and consequent outlawry of Sir Burleigh, had its result in an intense and but half-subdued irritability—a feeling that the world was in arms to further drag down, to more completely efface our importance, to reduce us to pensioners on the indulgence of others.

"If," said I, bitterly, "I have misled you, through indifference, to your misconstruction of my friendship with Sergius—through a sense of justice to him, which would not suffer me to echo the unfounded suspicions you express so constantly—take my word now and once for all, friendship is my warmest feeling towards Kil-

marnock—patience with him its development. Are you satisfied?"

"I will try to be—I do try—I battle with doubt as with a demon. I have no right to doubt you. Forgive me! since if I loved you less, I could reason better. Now I can only feel, and to see you with Sergius is agony to me. Let that suffice, as it should, to convince you that in asking you to give him and his transparent pretence of mere friendship up, I am asking no more than I have a right to demand."

However strongly I might have wished that no such thought should have harboured with him, I could not justly deny this, and sat silently reflecting.

"Helen," said he fervently, taking both my hands, "I love you better now than ever. You have taken a bitter pain, a cankering distress from my heart. You are the beautiful girl I met by the Mere again, when no one rivalled me in your regard."

"No one does now, believe me, when only you are reasonable."

"My own sweet angel and love!"

"There is the Laird beckoning for dinner, sir."

"My star, my rose, my million gold darling!"

"The soup to-day is crayfish, I saw him cook them."

"My sweet an——"

"Oh, stop, there is Appin making for the dinner; we shall get none if those Hielanders begin."

"They will not begin without me."

"Then it is cruel to keep them waiting. And see, there is Cameron of Lochiel debating between loyalty and hunger. What would have become of the miracle of loaves and fishes, if the multitude had been not only an hungered, but Hielanders?"

"A conspicuous absence of fragments," said he, lending me his hand. "Only, sweet, do not jest on sacred subjects."

"I am sorry, I did not know Appin's impatience to begin without us was sacred."

"Ye are lete, sir," was the little Laird's salutation, "an' crayfish soup must be supped hot—like luve."

Sergius smiled at this, and filled my pewter platter to overflowing, and we all ate as at a feast, being hungry with the cold and keen air of the hills. We had some smoked grilse, stewed venison, haggis—which out of doors is well enough—and bannock bread. Sir Burleigh managed to come down to dinner, but was silent and ate little. The chiefs were silent too, but voracious as wolves, and we all felt happier for our dinner.

In our highland eyry, we were none affected by the cold. The pure air of the hills agreed with us all. To be sure, we fed well on wholesome fare, and slept in closest, warmest nooks; and if by chance any grief or grievance overtook us, the wide sky above absorbed it, or it flew forth banished to the solitary hills.

Something, the philosophy of savages, held us —the frets, which haunt even hermitages could here have no abiding. The substantial grievance of the Manor's loss began to assume an aspect of indifference even to me. Sir Burleigh felt it yet, but not so to the height of lamentation I had feared for him.

"Here," said he, "is my best Manor, and hath not Casimir lost more? Would but ill become me to forget that."

"Spilled milk," said I, "can but go; tears for it are wasted. We will yet win the Manor back, Sergius himself says so."

"I am loth," said he, noting that two of the chiefs, Appin and another, had stopped, and were looking at us, "that any should be in error as to my now position with regard to importance. I have a mind to tell Appin."

"First advise with Sergius, sir. He is against it, and though we are wise—he is Wisdom."

"Nay," said he, "Sergius is no such Sir

Oracle as you constantly affirm. He is clever enough, but, as the lad says, is not to overbear our united voices in everything—as hitherto."

"The lad," said I, "is ingrateful as a serpent. Where he sees but a part of any plan, Sergius sees the whole. Where he builds on the sand, Sergius hews out a foundation of rock."

"Go on," said he, "to Ossian, since we are in his land:

> 'Dark was thy soul, yet soft to me as a breath of morn;
> It glared on others in lightning—to me a silver beam of night.'

Now Appin, by quoting that, has done this good—to remind me that your defence of Sergius is something warm. Pray, my dear, remember I did not attack him. Why do you vex yourself to defend?"

"He is constantly attacked," I mutter, *sotto voce*, "and though you may not, others do, infecting you with heresies."

"More Ossian," said he, smiling. "Well, you are a brave, bright little body, and love your friends; but, my dear, there is no need for enthusiasm about Kilmarnock nor his talents."

"Sir, I am not enthusiastic, nor Ossianic. I thought you, too, loved Sergius?"

"Oh, he is well enough," said he, with a shrug; "but his wise counsels cost me the Manor

—since, had I stayed, all could have been done equally well that has here been done."

"That is unjust," rose bitterly to my tongue, but remained unspoken, "since 'twas Stuart himself who counselled your coming."

Seeing, however, that this new heresy would be but firmer rooted by opposition I determined to let it die out, as it did in the course of a day or two. Either Sir Burleigh had reflected on its injustice, or had no more prompting from Stuart; who having, as I told him, invented a fine theory of wickedness, fitted it on to his friend.

"'Tis no such great misfit, however," said he, "but you may keep your demi-god, since he is going away with Appin for a few weeks. I am going too, and you and Sir Burleigh return to Leith. Where we are going is too cold and wild for you. Yet that's not it," he added sullenly, "you force this parting on me. Neither cold nor heat would matter, was you to remember that I cannot be hourly tortured through Sergius."

"Mighty well, sir," said I, willing to tease him. "So you think of me as Richard Crookback, of Richmond, 'Afraid of being over shoes in snow.' I can bear any cold, any stress of weather except this 'variable' to which you treat me. Was you to have 'set fair' in your

face when you regarded me 'twould be too summer-like."

"Then you care for my regard?" he said, in a sort of rapture which oppressed me with a sense of having been cruel to him, the cloud lifting from his face, an eager and joyous look in his eyes. "Oh! my dear, we have been drifting from each other in this Sergius Maëlstrom. You cannot reconcile your friendship to him with love to me, since he is not content with friendship. Oh, Helen, come back to me and leave this perilous trifling. It is, indeed, 'to start at love and play with snakes,' when you elect as friend a man like Kilmarnock."

"I have never left you," said I, sobbing in his arms. "To me your suspicions are cruel and strange; if I have defied them forgive me. Your harshness makes me rebel. Oh, my dear, it was wrong—wrong to render you unhappy. Will you yet banish me to Leith? How can I be sure of your safety, from day to day, so far off."

My heart filled with love and tenderness, with penitence for his suffering, with joy at his contentment, his present happiness.

"Helen," said he, as he raised and kissed my face, "God grant this is not too bright a hope—that this banishment of Sergius is once for all!"

"There is need of no one's banishment," said

I—stung by this reiterated doubt, and withdrawing from him, penitent tears for having been cruel to him still in my eyes, but rapidly quenched by anger at his reasserting his grievance—"excepting mine. So happy as we might be, did you but remember to be just—merciful."

"Come back," said he. "Helen, I will not mention his name, nor—did not adverse mention of him rouse you to wrath—should I think so much about him. Appin, for instance—find him guilty of every defect, you would but smile or pity him, while to hint that Kilmarnock is other than perfect——"

"Then do not hint it!"

"By ——! I will. I will not stand by and see him worshipped, nor cry peace where is no peace."

We had wandered on a few paces apart, and now came to a small trickling runlet, a silver thread running between mossy stones, over dark grasses and ferns. My anger vanished at sight of this pretty innocent piece of Nature's handiwork. No one can quarrel properly in the open air. The dear mother smiles and the grievance dies down ; or frowns, and we pause, awe-struck at our own petty anger.

I laughed at Stuart's defiance, stepping over

the silver thread, wetting my boots, while he stood sullen, irresolute on the other side.

"Come," said I, holding out my hand, and remembering opportunely the words of a Jacobite ditty—

> 'Come o'er the stream, Charlie, dear Charlie, brave Charlie,
> Come o'er the stream and dine wi' Maclean;
> And tho' you be weary, we'll make your heart cheery,
> And welcome our Charlie and his loyal train.'

All except Sergius."

"You are infernally saucy," said he, "and sing like a crow."

"And you," said I, "grin like a grandam ape, and think I mean you. Let my singing alone."

> "'We'll bring down the brach deer,
> We'll bring down the black steer,
> Oh, on for somebody!
> Oh, hey for——'"

"Stop, sir," for, stepping across the runlet, he began to sing himself, which, with mine, made a horrid discord.

He would not, however, notice this discontent of a rival singer, but, with his arm about my waist, wandered on, warbling very sweetly some Italian love song or other.

The sun shone out on the bare hilltop, here and there tufts of late heather showed purple in sheltered nooks.

The sweet Italian aria was like a skylark's

song—a song of hope, of youth, of love. All our discontents were forgot, our hearts beat happily, joyously.

"This," said he, "is better than a kingdom—it is youth's empire. I can never be happier than now. It is like a morning in Eden to me."

It was like a morning in Eden—warm, still, sunny. The sky above blue as summer—as cloudless. Ourselves at peace, all grievances forgot.

* * * * * *

Yet further up into those Highland eyries, to regions where snow was not far off, with its keen, pure air. We became cave-dwellers, getting thin by attrition of the keen atmosphere, which seemed, as it tried to naturalize us, to wear off all heaviness of flesh, and leave us spring and muscle.

* * * * *

Many and many a camp-fire lit up the darkness of winter nights. Crowds of loyal clansmen came, silent as the snowstorms, to see their Prince, departing—that over—as silently. We were never dull—the mere struggle for existence kept us too busy. How we all looked I shall never know for certain, for we were all generally wrapped round with plaids, and so far as was apparent looked like a lot of kirtled Albanians.

END OF VOL. II.

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